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# THE CHINA TANGLE

# The China Tangle

The American Effort  
in China  
from Pearl Harbor  
to the Marshall Mission

BY HERBERT FEIS

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## FOREWORD

THIS is an attempt to tell what the American government tried to do in and with China during the war and the critical period of peace-making. The opening part is concerned with the grim effort to sustain Chinese resistance, marking the decisions and strains which influenced later events in ways not clearly foreseen. From this theater of war, the story broadens out in the determination of China's future place in the Pacific, the contest between the Chinese government and the Chinese Communists, and the worried American diplomatic exertions at Moscow, Cairo, Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam, and beyond to carry out the concept of the United Nations in the Pacific. This regrettably makes a tale of crumpled hopes and plans that went awry.

Before he starts, the reader may want to know the main sources from which the narrative is derived.

First, there are the published ones of growing amplitude, particularly:

The volume published by the American government in 1949, title: *United States Relations with China*, with Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949. This is popularly known as the China White Paper.

The volumes of documents and testimony resulting from the Hearings of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations on the *Military Situation in the Far East* (evoked by the recall of General MacArthur).

The volumes of documents and testimony resulting from the Hearings of the Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on the *Institute of Pacific Relations*.

The volumes of documents and testimony resulting from the Hearings of the Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on *State Department Employee Loyalty Investigation*.

Winston Churchill's great history of his wartime experience.

I have besides been enabled to consult many other sources. Most important of these were

The original records of the State Department.

Those records of our military action in the China-India Burma Theater of war that were being used by the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, in its task of writing the official history of that effort. The most instructive of these—in fact to me invaluable—were the first two (of three) volumes written by Charles F. Romanus

and Riley Sunderland. They, as authorized, generously allowed me to read their studies in approved pre publication form. These are cited in this book as the Sunderland Romanus Manuscript, Volumes I and II. The first has since appeared in print entitled *Stilwell's Mission to China*, and the other is scheduled to appear in due course. Students of our recent Far Eastern military policy and action will surely wish to read them.

Extensive notes on the pertinent papers of Harry Hopkins, made before they were put in the custody of the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park

Comprehensive notes on the papers of the Honorable Patrick J. Hurley, former Special Representative of the President and Ambassador in China. These notes were made from the original papers by Sunderland and Romanus, and Ambassador Hurley most kindly allowed me to consult, use, and cite them freely.

The voluminous records, entitled *Diaries*, kept by the former Secretary of the Treasury, Henry J. Morgenthau, Jr., which he with equal generosity allowed me to use.

Selected papers in the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, mainly those of a sort which could be accounted as part of the State Department files.

A variety of other documents, notes, or diaries kept by participants in this history which I was permitted to study for information and guidance.

This work was made possible only by the wish of the State Department to have this historical experience as fully explored and objectively told as it could be at this time while the meaning of so much of it is still hard to grasp. For this reason the former Secretary of State, Dean G. Acheson, encouraged the enterprise, and the competent Departmental Committee authorized me to consult the official files. From beginning to end many members of the Division of Historical Policy Research in the State Department aided me in locating the pertinent records and gave me the benefit of their own knowledge, for such help I am greatly indebted to Dr. G. Bernard Noble, the Chief of that Division, and to Dr. E. Taylor Parks, who most particularly supported my search for information in every direction and put me in touch with others who might help me, and Miss Marion L. Terrell for the same sort of enthusiastic interest, to Mr. Robert C. Hayes, Dr. Benjamin Bock, and Dr. G. M. Richardson Dougall for allowing me to consult papers they had prepared on some of the most important diplomatic activities. I am also as greatly indebted to Mr. Charles A. Patterson of the Division of Communications and Records for his constant and good natured assistance in

searching and using the records, without which I would have missed or mistaken much, and to Mrs Mary Ellen Milar for similar guidance

I owe thanks also to many individuals who helped me to carry out this study To former President Harry S Truman for his direct responses to queries asked of him about several important episodes, to the former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, W Averell Harriman, and the former Ambassador to China, Clarence E Gauss, for long and enjoyable talks about matters with which they were concerned, to Joseph C Grew, former Under-Secretary of State, the Hon Stanley K Hornbeck, the first Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department, and Joseph C Ballantine, his successor in that post, for similarly patient search of their memories, to Ambassador Charles E Bohlen, who was the American interpreter at most of the talks with Stalin and Molotov of which this book tells, to former Ambassador George Kennan and former Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk for thoughtful comment on various perplexing points, to John P Davies for the loan of his notes on the Cairo Conference, to former Special Assistant to the Secretary of War Harvey Bundy and former Assistant Secretary of War John J McCloy for enlightening information, to the Honorable T V Soong, who during much of the period of this narrative was Acting President of the Executive Yuan and Foreign Minister of China, for talking over various impressions with me, to Joseph Alsop for vivid and dramatic recollections of things seen, heard, and done while he was in China as an aide to General Claire L Chennault and an intimate of T V Soong, to Herbert Elliston, Editor of the *Washington Post*, who has long been an intent and knowledgeable student of American policy in China, to former Secretary of State James F Byrnes for his readiness to review his experience with China matters with me, to Captain Tracy B Kittredge, and Dr Rudolph A Winacker of the Department of Defense, Professor McGeorge Bundy of Harvard University, Mr Arthur W Page, Mr Paul G Hoffman and Mr Richard M Bissell, and Mr Clayton Fritchey

In connection with these acknowledgments it is essential to repeat a statement made in the Foreword to *The Road to Pearl Harbor* that "The help given me by many people in the government must not be taken as indicating any kind of official approval, sponsorship or responsibility This book is the work of a private scholar"

Throughout I was assisted by Mrs Arline Van Blarcom Pratt, who did much of the research in the records and checked the manuscript critically, by Mrs H Freeman Matthews, Jr, and Miss Alice Pusey,

who patiently carried on the typing of the manuscript through its many revisions, and by my wife, Ruth Stanley Brown Feis, who gave me great editorial help and read the proofs

Again I am grateful to the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, for appointing me to membership and for providing aid and favorable environment, and to the Ford Foundation for a grant which enabled me to write this book

*On learning of the task on which I was engaged, a friend sent me a quotation from Horace, writing to Pollio, who was then composing a history of the Civil Wars "You are treating of the civil strife that began with Metellus' consulship, the cause of the war, its blunders and its phases and fortunes, fame, friendship of leaders (triumvirs) and weapons stained with blood as yet unexpiated—a task full of dangerous hazard—and you are walking, as it were, over fires hidden beneath treacherous ashes"*

The fiery disputes ignited by the failure of our efforts in China are still burning bright. We remain suspended before the cineramic screen of this experience, unable to grasp its import with assurance. Thus I leave to the hour of more confident judgment the argument over what was done right and what was done wrong, who is to be praised and who is to be blamed. I have not sought in telling the story either to console or condemn. But now that it is written I greatly hope that by assisting just understanding of what occurred and why, it will reconcile us in the task ahead of redeeming our purposes in China.



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P A R T   O N E

*From Pearl Harbor to the Cairo Conference*

## December 1941: The Longed-for Combination

OUR full induction into this last World War followed our refusal to let China fend for itself. We had rejected all proposals which would have allowed Japan to remain in China and Manchuria. In November there had been a week of wavering—when a chance gleamed of getting time to make the Allies' position in the Pacific so strong that Japan would retreat. But then the American government had decided not to ease, even briefly or slightly, the way of the transgressor. This resolve was hardened by signs that the Chinese would regard even a short truce as desertion. Japan had struck—rather than accept frustration. The American people, in a war which they had not sought, had full right to feel that they had been not only true to their ideals but most faithful defenders of the people of China.

The Chinese for some time past had sustained themselves by the belief that the United States and other Allies would soon be on, if not at, their side. Then China would no longer be a neglected and almost isolated battleground. In prospect the Generalissimo, Chiang Kai shek, saw American ships coming across the Pacific to reopen ports and land American troops. They would bring food, clothing, medicine, weapons and ammunition for the Chinese armies, trucks and oil to carry them into battle. American planes would fly in from India, the Philippines, Siberia. They would protect the Chinese cities and spread death among the Japanese soldiers in China. The forces of the British Commonwealth and of the Netherlands, after resisting the Japanese southern thrust, would come to the rescue of China. The soldiers of the Soviet Union would march down from the north to drive the Japanese out of Manchuria and North China. The tired Chinese armies which had for four years been battling alone would be merely one element in an overwhelming alliance. The inland refugee capital of Chungking would become a center of joint strategy and command.

This was the longed for great combination, revolving about China. A composite plan for the conduct of the war expressive of this design was sketched out within days after we entered the war. It was swiftly found unusable and discarded. But, until the chances of realizing it grew faint, the American government remained partial to this basic conception of how the war in the Far East might be fought. Chiang

Kai-shek clung to it to the end, as a script of the role which China ought to be enabled to play in the war and in the world settlement to follow. His attitude was thereafter touched by the sense that his Allies had been recreant.

This narrative is the story of what the American and Chinese governments tried to do together and what they did, of how and why their effort waned and failed. It is the tale of the wearing out of a conception that was not well enough aligned with reality.

In December 1941 the United States was sending Lend Lease weapons and supplies into China through Burma and India. It was trying hard to improve the transport system toward and within China. American airmen, recruited and supplied with combat aircraft by favor of the American government, were fighting in China (the American Volunteer Group, known as the Flying Tigers, under command of the skilled and determined General Chennault). An American military mission, headed by General John Magruder, was beginning its work. It had been sent out to advise and assist the Chinese in the use of our weapons and in the training of their forces.

But there was no agreement between the American and Chinese governments in regard to combined action should the United States come to war against Japan. Neither our Ambassador in China, Clarence E. Gauss, nor General Magruder had been told what to do to meet the effects of the extension of the war over the whole of the Pacific. Nor had China any understanding with the other opponents of the Axis in the Pacific—Great Britain, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, and the Soviet Union. Nor, to tell the whole position, was there any joint or combined program for the defense of the Southwest Pacific. Despite much talk between military staffs, none was completed and ready for use.

Chiang Kai shek was first to speak up for common decision and action. As soon as the news of Pearl Harbor was flashed to Chungking, he asked the American and British diplomatic and military representatives who were stationed there to come together and discuss what was to be done. In two conferences on December 8th (the day of the Pearl Harbor attack by Chungking time) he outlined his ideas for a great coalition to share with China the task of defending the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> All enemies of the

<sup>1</sup> Chungking time is 12 hours in advance of Washington time. Thus in our histories the time of attack on Pearl Harbor is stated as about 2.00 p.m., December 7th, the

Axis, he thought, should participate in a military alliance and unify their operations under American leadership—China, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, and the Soviet Union. They should at once establish a joint military war council to plan and to coordinate the strategy of the war in the Pacific. Further, he suggested, they should at once sign an agreement not to conclude a separate peace. These proposals are an index to the scope of Chiang Kai-shek's visions and hopes.

The first failure in response came quickly. On the next day, December 9th, the Soviet military representative in Chungking, General Chuikov, gave the Generalissimo a note which read, "In regard to a Soviet declaration of war it is essential that we should make adequate preparations and work out comprehensive plans for war cooperation among the Soviet Union, China, the United States and Great Britain." Chiang Kai-shek, in a talk with Magruder, wishfully construed this to mean that the Soviet government would not enter the Pacific war until the democratic powers worked out a comprehensive plan for joint action. He asked Magruder again to urge Washington to take the lead in formulating and initiating such a plan, and not to wait for the Soviet Union to enter the war. The details, Chiang Kai-shek thought, could best be worked out in Chungking since the plan should cover both military operations and mutual aid.

The next day the Soviet Ambassador, Litvinoff, in Washington, called upon Secretary of State Hull. He had gone to see the President and Hopkins about Lend Lease allocations. They had touched on the question of whether Russia was going to join in the war against Japan. Chiang Kai-shek had asked the President to inquire. The Soviet Ambassador told Hull that he had just heard that his government had decided that because of the strain of the struggle against Germany it could not at that time cooperate with us in the war against Japan. This he stated "rather positively." The Secretary of State did not argue, but he hinted that the Soviet Union might be making a wrong decision. He told Litvinoff that he knew that Japan had promised Germany to attack the Soviet Union whenever Hitler asked it to do so. He pointed out that if the United States could get air bases in the Maritime Provinces of Siberia its heavy bombers could strike at both the Japanese naval bases and cities. By allusions and illustration, Hull tried to convey the opinion that all opponents of the Axis would stand or fall together. Finally, to

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calendar and clock in Chungking at the time when the attack occurred stood at 2 on a m., December 8th

quote from the memo that the Secretary made of this long conversation, "I constantly came back to the point that if Russia should refrain from cooperation with us in the East while we continue to aid her, there will be a constant flow of criticism about why we are aiding Russia in a world movement involving all alike and Russia in turn is not cooperating with us in the Far East"

The President, the State Department, and War Department, all were meanwhile trying to see what could be done to give actuality to the proposals which Chiang Kai shek had sent on. Hull told the Chinese Ambassador that he had discussed with both the President and Secretary of War Stimson the question of unifying and coordinating Allied forces in Asia, especially in the South Sea areas, and that the American government would soon have some proposals. He went over the same ground with the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax. The latter said that talks were going on with the Australian and Canadian Ministers of War.

On the 14th the President sent messages to Chiang Kai shek and Stalin. He suggested to the Generalissimo that he call a joint military conference in Chungking not later than December 17th for the purposes (1) of exchanging information and considering what action, especially in East Asia, could best be used to beat the Japanese, (2) of trying to formulate a definite, though preliminary, plan for joint action by December 20th. He told Chiang Kai-shek that he was suggesting to the British that while this meeting in Chungking was going on, they should hold in Singapore an army navy conference of British, Chinese, American, and Dutch officers to make operational plans for the southern zone. He also reported that he was letting Stalin know that he would be glad to learn his, Stalin's, views from the northern standpoint.

Roosevelt's message to Stalin, sent through Litvinoff, told of the moves which he was trying to initiate toward joint action. It concluded, "I venture to hope that the preliminary conferences I have outlined for this coming week may lead to the establishment of a more permanent organization to plan our efforts." The War Department supplemented the President's message by a telegram to Colonel Faymonville, our Military Attache in Moscow, appointing him to represent the War Department at the Moscow conference. He was informed (in paraphrase) that "The reason for this preliminary conference is to give Stalin a chance to express his particular views rather than to set out and urge any special American viewpoint. For your own information, the War Department believes that the Japanese forces are greatly over-

extended and they ought to be prevented from concentrating on a succession of single objectives. The United States has the fixed intention of maintaining our Far Eastern defenses and we are immediately reinforcing the Philippines with air and by air."

The President further extended his effort by sending a message to Wilhelmina, Queen of the Netherlands, who was then living in London. He explained the proposals that he had made for conferences at Chungking and Singapore, and expressed the hope that the Netherlands government would be represented in both meetings.

Chiang Kai shek eagerly called the foreign representatives together again to formulate the plan wanted by the President. But the senior American and British officers who had been designated for these consultations (Generals Brett and Wavell) were delayed. Their deputies (Magruder and Dennys) were without instructions. The only Dutch official who could get to Chungking on time had no authority. The Soviet member was there only to listen and observe. This makeshift group was then asked to do in utmost haste what the American and British top military planners had failed to do in prolonged earlier attempts—that is, to produce a plan for concerted resistance to Japan in the Far East, and to do this while the Japanese were knocking the Allied forces about from point to point.

Chiang Kai shek invited General Magruder to prepare the agenda—an awesome task. How awesome was made plain when Chiang Kai shek outlined his ideas to Generals Magruder, Dennys, and Chuikoff informally at dinner on the 17th. The details, reread now, arouse wonder at the faith of what could be achieved among a group of countries, each of which was beset by worry as to what might happen to it at any moment. In sum, the Generalissimo thought that the conference should devise a comprehensive plan for war operations in the Pacific, this was to include plans for the joint defense of Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Burma, the Netherlands East Indies, as well as China, and be supplemented by operation plans for land, sea, and air forces and the distribution of Lend Lease supplies. There ought to be, he thought, in Chungking a joint general staff, and in Washington a supreme war council of the countries fighting in the Pacific.\*

Soviet participation sometime *in the future* was still anticipated. But the answer which Stalin sent to Chiang Kai shek left the time vague—sometime could be any time, no time. In his message of the 12th Stalin

\* Memo by MacMorland December 17, 1941



said again that he thought that the Soviet Union ought not to divert its strength to the Far East, and adjured Chiang Kai shek not to keep asking that it declare war on Japan. The Generalissimo might have drawn some comfort from the last paragraph, "Soviet Russia must fight Japan, for Japan will surely unconditionally break the neutrality pact. We are preparing to meet that situation, but it takes time to prepare. Therefore, I again implore you not to take the lead in demanding that Soviet Russia at once declare war on Japan." The British government was not disposed to press the question. Eden, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was in Moscow talking with Stalin. He informed the American Ambassador in London, Winant, that Stalin had said that to his regret he was not able to help us in the Far East. Eden added that he thought the Soviet attitude in the Far East was perfectly loyal, that Stalin was determined not to provoke Japan at that critical hour but that he would be in a position to help in the spring. Therefore, Eden said he thought it unwise to talk to Stalin at this time about allowing the United States to use air bases in Siberia.<sup>3</sup> *The American government concluded that nothing would be won by doing so.*

The planes bringing Brett and Wavell to Chungking arrived on the 22nd, and they joined in the talk at once. By then it ought to have been clear to all that the forces which Japan was sending on this southward advance were so strong, skilled, and mobile that the defenders must fight as one if any part of the area was to be saved. But the points which emerged during the following days of discussion showed how mistaken was the idea that an all-over strategic program could be defined in China. For the necessary power both to make and execute decisions was elsewhere, and very hard decisions they were. In order to have a systematic combined plan of defense there would have to be jointly accepted preferences and priorities. One or more countries would have to agree to allow its territories to be exposed in order that others could be more strongly defended. The same questions that had divided the American and English staff planners in earlier meetings emerged again, and in more complicated form. Should the available air and naval forces and Lend Lease supplies be devoted first of all to the defense of the Philippines, or of Singapore, or of the Netherlands East Indies, or of Burma and the Burma Road, or should they be divided among these tasks, and in what portions? Could the operations of the separate national combat forces be coordinated without some unified top command, and who was to exercise that? Such questions, it became plain, and Wavell made it

<sup>3</sup> Telegram December 19 1941 from London

doubly plain, could not be decided in Chungking Chiang Kai shek tried to have them answered in a vague way which would confer upon China and himself a central role But his proposals were lost in the depths of the differences All that the representatives at Chungking could really agree on was the need for mutual aid and long range planning.

Even though these preliminary talks had shown that definite decisions could not be made, the Generalissimo on the next day called the joint military conference into formal session—its only formal session The participants continued to find the assignment out of reach \* They spent a good deal of time upon the very definite problem which the Japanese were thrusting upon them as they talked—how, during the next critical month, to defend Singapore and Burma They continued to make an earnest attempt to frame some plan of the kind which the President had asked Chiang Kai shek's original program was already impaired by the defection of the Soviet Union and cracked by the victories of the Japanese Still, he continued to redeem what he could of the concept He sought at least some endorsement of the basic principles of combined or joint strategy of the United States, the British Commonwealth, and China over the whole Pacific area, and more immediately of (1) concerted Chinese British strategy for the defense of Burma and Malaya, and (2) cooperation between the air and land forces of the United States and China The range of his hopes was still broad enough to lead him to suggest that the strategic council to be established in Chungking (and of which he would presumably be chairman) should include in the scope of its consideration even the Indian Ocean

The expectation that the other Allies would center effective powers of decision over the vast Pacific area in Chungking was unreal, in view both of their states of mind and the condition of their military forces It was out of proportion because it implied that Chiang Kai shek should be given an active, and possibly superior, part in determining the use of armed forces and resources far *stronger than those of China*

But these things having been said, a substantial measure of reasoned

\* This formal meeting was a large one The Chinese group, in addition to Chiang Kai shek and Madame Chiang Kai shek, included the Minister of War and five other Chinese generals For the United States there were Brett and Magruder and some subordinates; for Great Britain, Wavell, Dennys, and some subordinates; for Australia, Sir Frederick Eggleston, the Australian Minister After dinner these were joined by the British Ambassador, Clark Kerr (afterwards Lord Inverchapel), General Chennault, and Owen Lattimore, then adviser to Chiang Kai shek

This account of the discussion, as of the other portions of the history of the Chungking conference, is derived mainly from (1) the papers of the Magruder mission, particularly the memos made by Colonel MacMorland, and (2) the Sunderland Romanus manuscript, Vol 1

and reasonable purpose could be found in the Generalissimo's approach

1 Up to then both the American and British governments had attached far more importance to the war in Europe than to the war in the Pacific. They had provided China with only a thin margin of support. If China were to be left on the edge of the struggle, even after the United States had come in, it was a gloomy and, he thought, unfair prospect. The Generalissimo hoped to have the balance made more even by the formulation of a global strategy plan which included China. His thought, as expressed in the records of the formal session, was that "there should be reasons and facts to determine the handling of the various war fronts: if such facts should indicate that the Asia front is the most important then grand strategy would put the emphasis on priority for that war area."

2 Every other country in the Pacific hemisphere was concerned first of all with the safety of its own segment, the United States with the Philippines, the Netherlands with the East Indies, Britain with Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand for themselves. Each was seeking forces and equipment. In the battle of priorities, China was likely to fare no better than it had in the past, perhaps less well—unless there was a basic change in the recognition of its status.

3 Moreover, China was being called upon to aid in the defense of other countries. Chiang Kai-shek was being asked (and had offered) to send Chinese troops into Burma. He was being asked to allow a squadron of the American Volunteer Group, which had been recruited to protect China, to fight in Burma (and was agreeing to do so). He was being urged to give up Lend Lease supplies designated for China which were on the docks at Rangoon. What guarantee did he have that other countries would give back what he was now called upon to give up, and in their turn contribute to the defense of China? A general plan which fairly defined the rights of each might be such a guarantee.

In sum, Chiang Kai-shek's ideas and plans were not merely vain or unbalanced. But time and events were all against him. It was hard to refute Wavell's contention that it was not practicable to plan beyond present resources and immediate actions. No government, except possibly the Chinese, was ready to obligate itself in regard to the future direction of its war effort until it had further chance to measure the dangers it faced.

Despite these obstacles to both vision and decision, the conference at Chungking did compose and approve an answer to the President. This was called a plan, but it was only an unfinished outline of intent. Stu

dents of that most difficult task of arriving at combined military plans for a large group of nations, each in danger, and none knowing where danger may come hardest, would find its details of interest.<sup>2</sup> But this account will pass them by, noting merely the conclusion which General Dwight D. Eisenhower, then Deputy Chief of the War Plans Division for the Pacific and Far East, passed on to his colleagues after studying it that "very little, in the way of concrete results" had been achieved. Soon thereafter, the President's first outline for the combined planning and direction of the war in the Far East, having shown itself impractical, was given up. The task was taken over by the American and British Chiefs of Staff, meeting as the newly formed Combined Chiefs of Staff.

Roosevelt had been in so great a hurry because he was expecting Churchill in Washington to talk grand strategy. The Prime Minister found "the extraordinary significance of China in American minds, even at the top, strangely out of proportion. I was conscious of a standard of values which accorded China almost an equal fighting power with the British Empire, and rated the Chinese armies as a factor to be mentioned in the same breath as the armies of Russia."<sup>3</sup> He made it clear that he thought this judgment foolish, in his later words, "I told the President how much I felt American opinion overestimated the contribution which China could make to the general war. I said I would of course always be helpful and polite to the Chinese, whom I admired and liked as a race and pitied for their endless misgovernment, but that he must not expect me to adopt what I felt was a wholly unreal standard of values."<sup>4</sup>

It is not to be wondered that the President and Prime Minister failed

<sup>2</sup> It had six main points.

"1. As a first essential to secure against enemy attack Rangoon and Burma, both of which are vital for China's continued resistance and any extension of joint action from China. Meanwhile to take offensive air action against Japanese bases and installations to the greatest extent that resources permit.

"2. Maintain China's resistance by continued supplies of material to enable Chinese armies to prepare and train for ultimate offensive against Japan.

"3. Meantime the Chinese armies should continue to occupy the Japanese forces on their front by attacks or threats of attacks and by action against their vulnerable lines of communication.

"4. As soon as resources permit, to pass to an offensive against Japan with all forces available, Chinese, British and American.

"5. This joint military council sitting in Chungking will meet and submit information and proposals to enable the Allied Supreme War Council to work out strategy for East Asia.

"6. Hope is expressed that a permanent organization to be set up in the United States will soon materialize."

<sup>3</sup> *The Hinge of Fate*, Winston S. Churchill, 1950, page 133.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

—as the conference in Chungking had failed—to work out an agreed or joint strategy for the whole Pacific area. But they took what probably both thought was a first and essential step toward it: they agreed upon the organization of two combined commands—one for the Southwest Pacific and one for China.

The President went to pains to make sure that Chiang Kai-shek would feel that his ideas and wishes had been kept well in mind, and that China was counted on to have a real and inner part in the proposed arrangements—not a focal part or wholly equal one, such as the Generalissimo had sought, but still one which China could make important by its effort. He explained, by a message sent on December 31st, that he and Churchill had agreed to the appointment of a Supreme Commander of American, Dutch, Australian, and British forces in the Southwest Pacific Theater to coordinate the common effort.<sup>8</sup> There seemed to be, he observed, a similar need in China for a similar command arrangement. Therefore, he suggested that Chiang Kai-shek should undertake, by agreement, to exercise supreme command over all the forces of the united powers that would operate within the China Theater. That theater, as then conceived, was to include not only China but such parts of Thailand and Indo China as might be occupied by the United Nations. In order to make the command effective, he advised Chiang Kai-shek to organize at once a joint planning staff to which the American, British, and Chinese governments should appoint members. This joint staff was to function under the Generalissimo's direction.

Such an arrangement, the President said, would give the Generalissimo a chance to exercise his influence and advice in the formulation of general strategy for the conduct of the war in all theaters. But in a note which Harry Hopkins wrote about this plan, he acutely observed that all Chiang Kai-shek was getting that he did not have already was that American and British troops in China would fight under him. This

<sup>8</sup> ABDA COM for the Southwest Pacific was set up during this meeting of British-American authorities known as the ARCADIA Conference, 24 December 1941 to 14 January 1942, and approved by the Australian, British, Dutch, and American governments whose initials formed the name of the command. Designed to stem the tide of Japanese advance, it was composed of American, British, Dutch, and Australian forces, and included all the land and sea areas in the general region Burma-Malaya-Netherlands East Indies and the Philippines. It did not include India. A British officer, General Sir Archibald Wavell, was selected as supreme commander. General Wavell arrived in Batavia on January 10, 1942 and actually assumed command on January 15, 1942. ABDA COM was short-lived. After the fall of Singapore, the Combined Chiefs of Staff dissolved it, and it ceased operations on February 25, 1942.

Burma was nominally included in ABDA. But in practice, as will appear in the following account of the campaign in that country, Chiang Kai-shek retained actual command of the Chinese forces that fought there.

judgment was justified in the sense that the American British proposal did not schedule large actions in the China Theater in the near future, nor did it give assurance that American forces would be sent to fight alongside the Chinese, nor even that China would get any larger share of the total military production of the Allies. But it did give the Generalissimo a recognized share of authority. It also left him a future chance to play a part in main strategic decisions if the Chinese, through their great numbers, could make their theater of war important.

On January 5, 1942, Chiang Kai shek answered that the proposed arrangement was acceptable to him. He said that he would assume the post of Supreme Commander of the China Theater. He asked the President to appoint an American officer to be chief of the joint general staff which was to serve under him. The American government was already engaged in selecting that officer, preparing his orders, and worrying about what could be done to create through him a combined war program in China.

By then the Japanese forces had captured Hong Kong and were advancing on Manila. They were moving down the Malay peninsula to Singapore, and were entering Lower Burma across the Thailand frontier. As soon as they took one place, they moved troops and air forces with great swiftness to the next point of assault, giving the Allies no chance to collect enough strength anywhere to stop them.

## The Dispatch of the Stilwell Mission

ROOSEVELT and Churchill had agreed on the global strategy that was to govern the direction of the war against the Axis. The American and British military staffs had given their confirmation. It was to direct all needed means to defeat Germany first, and to use only such means as could be safely spared to push Japan back in the Pacific and out of China. The place of China is concisely located by Secretary of War Stimson: "In Anglo-American grand strategy the war against Germany came first. Second came the great 'triphibious' movement across the Pacific toward the Japanese island empire. The China Burma India Theater was a poor third. Yet in its strategic and political significance this part of the world was of enormous importance. . . it constantly offered the possibility of striking military and political success, at a remarkably low cost. Strategically, the object of American policy in this area was to keep China in the war, and so to strengthen her that she might exact a constantly growing price from the Japanese invader."<sup>1</sup>

The Far Eastern segment of the "Anglo-American grand strategy" during the first months after Pearl Harbor visualized a cordon of defense against further Japanese expansion that would include China. One anchor of this cordon was to be in Australia, and the other in India and Burma. From the center there would be a growing air assault upon the Japanese in China, and later, with supplies that would be moved over the Burma Road, Chinese armies, working with the American air force, would begin to expel the Japanese. Meanwhile the combined naval forces, mainly British and Dutch, were to protect and keep open the ports of Australia, Burma, India, and Ceylon. The defense on land was to be made by a combination of British, Dutch, Australian, New Zealand, Indian, and Chinese forces with supporting American air power—the entire operation conducted through the ABDA Command. Such was the plan in mind when first it was decided to send a senior American military man to China to serve on Chiang Kai-shek's combined staff and to join the Chinese war effort to our own. But even as the officer selected, General Joseph W. Stilwell, started to work out with his colleagues in the Pentagon Building the features of his assignment, it was perceived

<sup>1</sup> *On Active Service in Peace and War*. Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy. 1947. page 528.

that by the time he got to China this vulnerable plan might have fallen apart

The War Department did not find it easy to tell Stilwell what he should try to do, or to inform him what means he could count on. The swift advances of the Japanese made it hard to forecast whether there would be any other forces left besides the Chinese to fight in the Pacific. The loss of the main Allied naval units in the heroic battles of the Java Sea made it doubtful whether it was going to be possible to convey men and materials to China by sea or land. And, also, no one knew how long the wearied Chinese armies could continue to stand up in battle. Within and beyond these uncertainties, there was at this time a difference of opinion in the Pentagon as to how important the China Theater might be. Secretary of War Stimson, thinking in somewhat the same way as Chiang Kai shek, believed it *might* presently be turned into a main theater of operations against Japan, both upon land and as a base for air attack. That would depend a great deal, he thought, on the abilities of the American officer in charge of our military effort in China. General Marshall, who had served in that country, regarded the possibilities of action in and through China as more limited. As time went on, Marshall's opinion came gradually to seem the more correct.

The War Department tried to make sure that the Generalissimo would confer on Stilwell enough authority to enable him to accomplish whatever circumstances might permit. T. V. Soong, in Washington as Chiang Kai shek's special representative, acted as intermediary in the discussions about the mission and Stilwell's relations with the Chinese government. Marshall, after a talk with Soong on January 23rd, thought all questions were settled. He told Stilwell that he was to leave at once for the Far East, that he would become Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo and, as such, China's representative on an Allied staff still to be created. Soon, Marshall added, it was expected that he would proceed to Burma, where it was hoped he would take command of the Allied forces, end disputes and rivalries, and save Burma for the United Nations.<sup>2</sup> But he dryly added, "By the time you get there you may be in command in Australia."

The Secretary of War in a letter to Soong on January 29th wrote out

<sup>2</sup> Sunderland Romanus manuscript Vol. 1. Substantially the same information was given the next day by Assistant Secretary of War McCloy to the State Department but he also seems to have anticipated that Stilwell would be given authority as well over some Chinese forces other than those in Burma.



his understanding of the functions of the United States Army representative that we were about to send to China, as follows

"To supervise and control all United States defense aid affairs for China

"Under the Generalissimo to command all United States forces in China and such Chinese forces as may be assigned to him

"To represent the United States Government on any International War Council in China and act as the Chief of Staff for the Generalissimo

"To improve, maintain, and control the Burma Road in China ""

Soong confirmed this statement in his answer. Before doing so he had assured the War Department that the Generalissimo understood the arrangement, welcomed it, and authorized him to enter into it. But later, when disputes occurred as to the nature and range of Stilwell's authority, the Chinese said that Soong had not given Chiang Kai shek a clear and full explanation of what the Americans thought the agreement meant.

Stilwell was told to be guided by this exchange of letters. His mission was, his orders stated, to increase the effectiveness of United States aid to the Chinese government for the prosecution of the war and to improve the combat efficiency of the Chinese army. In so doing he was authorized, "to accept any appropriate staff and/or command position that may be tendered you by the Generalissimo."

Stilwell prepared to leave for China. Critical doubts were already rumbling in his mind about the determination and motives of the Chinese and British. He was asking himself, and with reason, "Will the Chinese play ball? Or will they sit back and let us do it? Will the Limeys cooperate? Will we arrive to find Rangoon gone?"<sup>5</sup>

His farewell call at the White House on February 9th went awry. The President, it would seem, did not think it wise or useful at the time to discuss thoroughly and systematically the problems that Stilwell would find in China and Burma. Quite possibly his reason was that at the time he did not know what support and aid he might be able to give China, but he knew enough to know that in the near future it would not be much. Stilwell's fragmentary notes of the talk record the

<sup>5</sup> *United States Relations with China* with Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949. Based on the files of the Department of State. United States Government Printing Office, 1949. page 469.

<sup>6</sup> Sunderland Romanus manuscript, Vol. 1 and message, Lauchlin Currie to the President, June 28, 1942.

<sup>7</sup> *The Stilwell Papers* entry January 28, 1942.

President as predicting that the war situation would turn within a year, and as asking Stilwell to assure Chiang Kai shek that he, the President, regarded all enemies as equally important, and that the United States would see it through, and fight until China regained all its lost territory Stilwell found him "very pleasant and very unimpressive Just a lot of wind He was cordial and pleasant and frothy"<sup>6</sup> Harry Hopkins seems also to have allowed his thoughts to roam rather than to settle Stilwell remembered that he said, "You are going to command troops, I believe In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if Chiang Kai shek offered you the command of the Chinese army"<sup>7</sup>

With such a slighting impression of the seriousness and grasp of his commander-in-chief, it is probable that Stilwell wondered whether he could count on thick and thin support from Washington The amount of American help in sight for China was small He asked the War Department for substantial amounts of equipment for the forces he expected to command, and for the construction of air bases and of roads in and to China But urgent demands for the same resources were being made by American, British, and Russian commanders in every section of the war front The issue of many of the other battles being fought or about to be fought was judged more vital than what happened in China So Stilwell was promised only a small part of what he asked

In accord with Marshall's view it was decided that in this phase of the war the main form of American power that could be supplied and well used in China was air power Stilwell was told that we planned to increase the American squadrons operating in China as fast as planes could be had Limited means would also be provided to protect the roads and air lines into and within China, and to maintain and improve the transport service and services of supply In all, it was contemplated there would be about one thousand Americans in Stilwell's task force

Early in February, just before Stilwell left for China, General Arnold, head of the Air Force, advised the President that it was essential to develop a new air transport route from India into China in view of the imminent loss of the chief port of Burma, Rangoon He estimated that with planes which could be acquired from the American commercial air lines, the service could be started in a few days The President grasped at the plan with enthusiasm He hastened to tell Chiang Kai shek on February 9th that this air line into China would be maintained whether or not Rangoon was lost, and whether or not the land route

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* entry February 9 1942 and Sunderland Romanus manuscr pt Vol 1

<sup>7</sup> *The Stilwell Papers* entry February 9 1942

from India to China via Burma was kept open. This air transport service, with its last five hundred mile lap between Assam (in India) and the Yunnan plateau over the towering "Hump" of the Himalaya Mountains, was to become the greatest effort of its kind in the war. It was hoped that the promised skyway—to be made larger as fast as facilities could be provided in China—would allay the Generalissimo's discontent over the small secondary support which was all that China was to get in the near future and his anxiety over the prospect that China might be wholly cut off from outside help. Chiang Kai-shek was afraid that if this happened the Chinese people might give up the struggle, that provincial commanders and officials might separate from the government and deal with the Japanese. Then China, in effect, would be out of the war.

Stilwell faced utmost complexity in regard to the chances of developing a plan for the defense of Burma and the Burma Road and of carrying it out effectively. Decisions required agreement among the British, Chinese, and American governments, and also had to take into account the problems and fears of the governments of India and Australia. Action had to wait on their willingness to devote men and materials to the China-India-Burma combat area. Each wanted the others to contribute more than it was ready to provide and risk.

Stilwell's command relationships were also, it so turned out, unsettled. He was to find himself in some degree and respects subject to the orders of three different higher authorities: the Generalissimo, under whom he was to serve as both chief of staff and field commander, the American government, in regard to the employment of United States forces and resources (including the distribution of Lend Lease supplies for China), and the commanding British officer (Wavell, and after him, Alexander) about operations in Burma. With all three he would have difficulties. The situation in regard to command in the field in Burma was to prove no better. The exchange of letters between Stimson and Soong left up in the air the question as to what Chinese troops were to be placed under Stilwell's command in Burma or in China. The Generalissimo—it will appear—gave, took away, and gave again. Then the British Commander in Chief in India (Wavell) sought to maintain a presumptive right to exercise a coordinating field command over all forces in Burma, including the American air force and the Chinese ground forces.\*

\* The Combined Chiefs of Staff tried to define Stilwell's relations with the British

These were the troubles which Stilwell was to find in wait for him. While he was on his way the American government carried through one main measure which, it was hoped, would make his task easier. The Chinese government felt the need of some plain proof that it had the support of the Allies, and some notable demonstration of their interest in the plight of the Chinese people. The Allied governments were saying they could not send men or guns, or trucks or shoes, or huge flights of planes. But they could at least put to China's account dollars and pounds—future power to procure these and other things. Such action would be an augury of later help, and would also sustain China's finances against the stresses of staying in the war.

Giving reasons of this kind, on December 30th Chiang Kai shek had asked the American government for a loan of five hundred million dollars, and asked the British government for a similar sum. The request stated in general terms that the money would be used to support Chinese currency and ease the Chinese economic situation. But it did not explain in what ways this was to be done. Ambassador Gauss on January 8th said that he concurred with the Generalissimo's statement as to the need and effect of such a credit. But he thought the amount too great in relation to the needs of the situation. A small sum, he advised, could be well used to stimulate increased production, finance reforms in land ownership, and possibly to get some essential imports. But a loose lump sum credit would be poorly used, he thought, to support " . . . the retrogressive, self-seeking, and, I fear, fickle elements in and intimately associated with the [Chinese] Government." Gauss was staying on his rocky New England hillside, not in the streets shouting with the rest about our friendship with the Chinese.

On January 9th, Finance Minister Kung explained in a letter to the Secretary of the Treasury that he thought the loan justified both on economic and military grounds, but added, "Frankly, however, my reason for approaching you is political above all, and the import of a loan of this nature is even more important than the Lend Lease Bill's

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His forces, he was told, were, as they entered Burma to come under the ABDA command, which would ensure the necessary directives for his cooperation with the British. He would also be, it was visualized, the principal liaison agent between the ABDA command and the Generalissimo. But in practice these arrangements went awry in various ways and for various reasons—which the military historians will no doubt explore in detail. Thus to the end—despite transient accords—there was no firm understanding adjusting Stilwell's authority to the British authority. See *The Stilwell Papers* and General The Honorable Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander, K.C.B., 'Report on the Operations in Burma, 5th March, 1942 to May 20, 1942,' Supplement to *London Gazette*, March 11, 1943.  
 \* Telegrams, Gauss to State Department, December 30, 1941, January 8, 1942, in *United States Relations with China*, pages 471-476.

import The essence of such a move is timeliness, so as to demonstrate that China's confidence in the allied powers is matched by equal confidence in China of the allied powers, in the most crucial months of emergency immediately before us"<sup>10</sup>

All branches of the American government were inclined to respond They were willing to provide the means of dealing with the problem as pointed up by Hornbeck, political adviser on Far Eastern affairs in the State Department, as that " of giving Chiang Kai-shek and his close and loyal entourage a sufficient amount of support to enable them to overcome objections or defections of certain opposition groups, not disaffected groups by any means, but the defeatists and the appeasers " All were ready to accept the conclusion stated by Hull in the letter which he wrote to Morgenthau on the 10th " I feel that, as an act of wartime policy and to prevent the impairment of China's military effort which would result from the loss of confidence in Chinese currency and the depreciation of its purchasing power, it is highly advisable that the United States extend financial assistance to the Government of China I feel that the greatest possible expedition in reaching a position where an announcement can be made is highly important"<sup>11</sup>

But still they were bothered by some aspects of the transaction No one saw how China could use well in the near future so large a sum The Chinese government had drawn only a small part of the large Lend Lease allocation which had been made to it, but our delays in delivering the war materials asked by China was the main reason Then there was also the risk that the proceeds would be misspent, used mainly for the benefit of persons or groups close to Chiang Kai shek rather than in ways which would help the Chinese people and encourage their resistance

The Secretary of the Treasury felt himself responsible for the good use of American funds So he tried to probe further Soong did not deny the relevant financial points which the Secretary raised The essence of his answer was, "I have got to put it [the matter of the loan] in the language of the Generalissimo He is a general How can he say where he is going to use five hundred million troops? He has got to have them in reserve and then use them"<sup>12</sup>

The President had already told the Secretary of the Treasury that though China could give little security he was anxious to help "Chiang

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, page 476

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, page 477

<sup>12</sup> Record of conference in office, Henry Morgenthau, Jr, with Treasury and State officials January 13 1943 Morgenthau Diary

Kai shek and his currency," and hoped that Morgenthau could invent a way of doing so.<sup>13</sup> The first scheme that was thought up—either in the White House or in the Treasury—was startling. The two governments, it was proposed, should work out a program under which the American government would directly compensate each of one million Chinese soldiers at the rate of ten American dollars a month, five for pay, and five for maintenance. This would be paid them not in the same American dollar used in the United States, but in another unit of currency which the American and Chinese governments would devise together. It might be named the DEMO, short for democracy. The vagrant notion recalled that once a special dollar, named the Trade Dollar, was used in China, and another silver coin called the Maria Theresa Dollar was used in Abyssinia. Churchill, who was at the time in Washington, shared the President's and Morgenthau's almost gay enthusiasm for the idea. Or so Morgenthau was led to believe by Churchill's statement to him, "I authorize you, Mr. Morgenthau, to go ahead and make any arrangements you want with Dr. Soong, and I will back you up one hundred per cent."<sup>14</sup>

The novelty of the suggestion and the historical association may be regarded as bright panoply over a real purpose. The thought was that only by providing this special dollar in this way could we be sure that the benefit went to the common soldiers and their families. It appealed also as a way of dramatizing American partnership with the Chinese.

The Secretary of the Treasury tried it on Soong. After explaining it he added, "Mr. Roosevelt likes it, Mr. Churchill likes it and I hope the Generalissimo will like it."<sup>15</sup> Soong seems to have repressed his thoughts about the suggestion. But Chiang Kai shek a week later sent word that although he deeply appreciated Morgenthau's efforts which materialized in this proposal, he doubted whether it was practicable. He pointed out that if Chinese soldiers were paid in American currency there would be cleavage between the army and the general economic structure in China, and this might actually hasten the collapse of the Chinese currency. Some of the economists in the Treasury had thought the same. The Generalissimo reverted to his original request for a political loan of five hundred million dollars. He thought this loan should be regarded in the light of "an advance to an ally fighting against

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, entry of January 9, 1942.

<sup>14</sup> Memo talk Morgenthau Soong, January 13, 1942, *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

a common enemy, thus requiring no security or other prearranged terms as to its use and as regards means of repayment."<sup>16</sup>

After a further bout of talk it was worked out as Chiang Kai-shek wished. The President's compliance was due in part to the compulsion he felt to evade Chinese requests to share in the making of decisions about the distribution of weapons among the various Allies. General Marshall urged quick action, since he thought that the fall of Singapore and Rangoon might give great force to the Japanese appeal to the races of Asia to stand together. Stimson agreed, believing that we must at any price keep China in the war. On January 31st Hull again wrote to the President in favor of giving Chiang Kai-shek what he wanted. One sentence of this letter read, "The brilliant resistance to aggression which the Chinese have made and are making, and their contribution to the common cause, deserve the fullest support we can give."

Thus assured that the State and War Departments would share responsibility, the Secretary of the Treasury also began warmly to endorse it, though some of his advisers were still distressed at giving Chiang Kai-shek such large and loose means. Morgenthau thereupon tried to see whether the Soviet Union could not be induced to contribute. Perhaps with the knowledge of the President, he told the Soviet Ambassador in Washington of the loans which the American and British governments were about to give China. Litvinoff's comments were cool. He said it was doubtful whether the Japanese, then drunk with victory, would make peace with China. He thought that it was more probable that the Japanese would, if Singapore fell, synchronize their actions with the Germans, and attack the Soviet Union. That, Litvinoff said, his government expected. He felt that once the Soviet Union began to fight the Japanese, the Chinese ought to be greatly encouraged. Of the loan, he said not once but several times, "It is nothing but blackmail." And he suggested that negotiations be dragged out as long as possible.<sup>17</sup> Moscow, he told Morgenthau a few days later, had not replied to the report he had sent on the subject.<sup>18</sup> It was dropped.

The State, War, and Treasury Departments joined in an urgent and effective appeal to Congress to authorize the loan. The bill they sponsored left the Executive free to work out terms and conditions. The House of Representatives approved it by a joint resolution on the 4th

<sup>16</sup> Letter, Soong to Morgenthau, January 21, 1942 *United States Relations with China*, page 478

<sup>17</sup> Memo, talk between Morgenthau and Litvinoff, January 29, 1942 *Morgenthau Diary*

<sup>18</sup> Record, telephone conversation, Morgenthau and Litvinoff, February 2, 1942 *Ibid*

of February by a voice vote without debate. On the next day the Senate passed it unanimously. The President's message (February 7th) to Chiang Kai shek, notifying him of the action, construed it as a marked sign of faith in the common cause.

Morgenthau was left to do the best he could to keep some chance of examining the uses of the loan even if he could not control them. All he managed to secure was a letter from Soong which said that in connection with the loan agreement concluded that day, "I wish to inform you that it is the intention of my Government, through the Minister of Finance, to keep you fully informed from time to time as to the use of the funds provided in the said Agreement."<sup>19</sup>

Later, when the memories of emergency grew dim and the feelings of friendship with the Generalissimo grew tired, there was regret that we had not been more stubborn. After the Burma Road was closed, it became even less possible than before to transport goods into China. Much of the proceeds were used up in measures conceived as brakes on the course of inflation in China and the decline of value of the Chinese currency.<sup>20</sup> These failed. The ways in which the operations were conducted caused widespread report that much of the funds had gone to enrich individuals in the Generalissimo's close circle. This charge figures in the brief of those who later argued that the United States should no longer rely on Chiang Kai-shek. The loan conceived in a rush of vivid sympathy and alliance turned later into a cause of fault finding. Of this, more hereafter.

<sup>19</sup> Soong's letter of March 21, 1942 is printed on page 484 of the *United States Relations with China*. The loan agreement is printed on pages 510-512.

<sup>20</sup> On March 24, 1942, the Chinese Ministry of Finance announced an Allied victory loan of one hundred million dollars, to be backed by the new American credit at the rate of twenty Chinese dollars for one American dollar, and an equal issue of short term certificates similarly supported. The amount of both bonds and certificates sold was small until July 1943. Then there was heavy rush buying. In the meanwhile the amount of currency issue had substantially increased, and the purchasing power of the Chinese dollar, both in terms of domestic goods and foreign currencies, had declined.



## China Is Isolated

WHILE these decisions were being made, Stilwell was on his way to China. He arrived at New Delhi on February 25th, and after a week of talk with the British hurried on to Chungking. By then the defenders of Burma were in a state of shocked retreat. A short review of what had happened there before he came will make it easier to understand what happened afterwards.

Chiang Kai-shek had, in his first rushed talks with the foreign military representatives, recognized the need for coordinated action to defend Burma. He had asked what Chinese forces might be needed. General Denny's answer had been that one regiment would be wanted, and then perhaps a little later, two others—a division in all. The Chinese (Chiang Kai-shek and his Chief of Staff, General Ho Ying-chin) had said that they were ready to provide a much greater force, three divisions at once and three more shortly.<sup>1</sup> Denny had not pursued this offer nor did he when it was repeated a week later, on the 15th. He had said that Britain could not promise to provide the food and other supplies for the larger force. He had indicated that he thought that the Chinese government could help most in the defense of Burma by starting an offensive within China, thereby deterring the transfer of Japanese troops from China to Burma.

There was another problem. Chiang Kai-shek was saying that he was willing to provide a large force, some eighty thousand men in all, if there was a comprehensive plan for their use. He did not want to "dribble" them in, or to have them scattered around Burma. He wished them to operate as an independent unit in a selected area, preferably to take over the front along the northeast borders of Burma. As summed up by him, if a plan was worked out and if China was given a definite area to defend he would supply enough troops and assume responsibility, otherwise he would not.<sup>2</sup>

Wavell, who was soon to be head of ABDA, was due in Chungking any day. Meanwhile nothing had been done about the Chinese proposal, even though the British had not disputed the Chinese forecast.

<sup>1</sup> Chinese divisions are small. Their average size was about six or seven thousand men.

<sup>2</sup> Memo, conference, December 15, 1941, Chiang Kai-shek, Madame Chiang Kai-shek, General Ho Ying-chin, Chief of Staff, Generals Denny and Magruder, and others. Magruder Mission, War Diary.

that the expected formations from India might be slow in coming. Then in his first talk with Chiang Kai shek on the 23rd, Wavell had explained that circumstances—by which he meant the fast moving Japanese advances—were defeating all attempts to produce the comprehensive plan which the Generalissimo desired. No one, he had continued with conviction, could tell what forces or equipment would be available for the fight in Burma or how strong the Japanese attacking forces might be. As for the proffered Chinese help, Wavell had said he was willing to receive in Burma at once the elements of one Chinese division, and he had asked that another be kept on the alert on the frontier pending further disposition. The rest of the Chinese forces, he thought, had better remain for the time being in reserve at Kunming (in the adjoining Chinese province of Yunnan) and not be moved to the frontier.<sup>3</sup>

Of the several reasons given for taking no more help, the most salient ones were the limited supply of rice and the difficult means of transport. But Wavell had also said that it would be hard to give Chinese forces their own separate sector and lines of communication. He was still counting upon the arrival in time of British and Indian divisions from India. They were then at sea and with these and the Chinese troops already promised he felt he could hold Burma without the further help offered by the Chinese. He asked Chiang Kai shek for more time to see if his own troops arrived from India, if so the troops offered beyond the two divisions could be used to fight Japan in China and prevent them from moving more troops south.<sup>4</sup> Still other reasons may have affected his answer. He had thought, as he later recorded that, "... Obviously it was desirable that a country of the British Empire should be defended by the Imperial troops rather than foreign."<sup>5</sup> Also, if the impression of American observers was correct, he had a rather low opinion of the combat value of Chinese troops.

Churchill, writing of these early and brief strains in the softer after light, views them as a passing misunderstanding which "... though it did not affect the course of events, involved high politics."<sup>6</sup> But they did

<sup>3</sup> As recorded in the report he later made to Churchill in answer to the Prime Minister's request for an explanation, "I accepted both these divisions when I was at Chungking on December 23rd, and any delay in moving them down has been purely Chinese. These two divisions constitute Fifth Chinese Army, I understand except for one other division of very doubtful quality. All I asked was that Sixth Army should not be moved to Burmese frontier, as it would be difficult to feed." *The Hinge of Fate*, Churchill, page 134.

<sup>4</sup> MacMorland memo of conference, December 23, 1941.

<sup>5</sup> Dispatch on operations in the Southwest Pacific, Jan 15 to Feb 25, 1942. Supplement to *London Gazette*, January 1948.

<sup>6</sup> *The Hinge of Fate*, page 233.

in fact have an effect upon the course of events, stretching all the way from the first campaign in Burma to the final discussions in 1945 about the closing strategy of the war. For they infected the attitudes between the Allies. Chiang Kai-shek had construed Wavell's answer as a refusal and resented it. It caused him thereafter to be more resistant to proposals for Chinese participation in other Burmese offensives, and more insistent upon knowing what the British would do before he risked Chinese armies. Stilwell, who had just been told that he was to be American military representative in China, had expressed his thought about the incident in his notes for January 24th: "The British have one brigade east of Rangoon and one more on the way. That's what they thought sufficient to hold Burma. And the Supreme Commander, Wavell, refused Chiang Kai-shek's offer of two corps. [He] didn't want the dirty Chinese in Burma." The General had thereby illustrated his gift for rushing to the most harsh conclusions with the utmost speed. But more temperate minds in the War Department had shared his impression. General Marshall had let Wavell know clearly that he thought a mistake had been made. On the other hand, General Brett had thought Wavell's reasons for refusal logical. In his opinion it was most difficult to use large Chinese forces quickly, to transport them over poor roads the eight hundred and twenty miles from Kunming to Mandalay, and to provide the food, equipment, and motor vehicles that would be needed. This is one of the many questions which—the reader will find as he follows the narrative—I am compelled to leave to the judgment of more thoroughly informed military historians.

While these awkward differences were hindering Sino-British action in defense of Burma, Churchill's thoughts had turned to another possible source of support. Struck by the failure of British forces to cope with the Japanese advances down the Malay Peninsula, he had already begun to wonder whether the base at Singapore could be held, and whether it was wise to risk further losses that would be hard to bear for a naval base that would be of little use without a Far Eastern fleet. He had begun to incline to the judgment that it might be best to concentrate on the defense of Burma and on keeping open the Burma Road. On January 21st, he had quizzed the British Chiefs of Staff by memo, asking, "What is the value of Singapore [to the enemy] above the many harbours in the Southwest Pacific if all naval and military demolitions are thoroughly carried out?" "On the other hand," he had observed, "the loss of Burma

<sup>1</sup> *The Stilwell Papers* entry, January 24, 1942

would be very grievous. It would cut us off from the Chinese, whose troops have been the most successful of those yet engaged against the Japanese. We may, by muddling things and hesitating to take an ugly decision, lose both Singapore and the Burma Road." His idea had been to divert to Burma the British Commonwealth forces then at sea on their way to Singapore. A message from Curtin, the Prime Minister of Australia, had caused him to suspend this line of thought. On January 23rd, Churchill had heard from him that "the evacuation of Singapore would be regarded here and elsewhere as an inexcusable betrayal."

Even in an emergency diversion of reinforcements should be to the Netherlands East Indies and not Burma. Anything else would be deeply resented, and might force the Netherlands East Indies to make a separate peace.<sup>9</sup> Before renewing the suggestion, Churchill had waited to see how the fighting went throughout the region.

It had gone badly both in Burma and around Singapore. In Burma Japanese soldiers marching east from Thailand had captured Moulmein, a port on the Bay of Bengal, east of Rangoon.<sup>10</sup> They had quickly spread over the lower coastal area, and had begun the heavy and demoralizing bombing of Rangoon. Chiang Kai shek had gone down to India and Burma to resume the discussions about concerted defense. By then all the help that China could give was wanted. Churchill was impressing on Wavell the interest which the President attached to bringing Chinese troops down into Burma.<sup>11</sup>

Then, as the British strove to form a line to hold Rangoon, Singapore had fallen on February 15th. Wavell, with that base gone, had concluded that the chances of holding Java were small. Its loss, though a severe blow from every point of view, he thought, would not be fatal. Therefore he had advised against further efforts to reinforce Java, which might compromise the defense of Burma or Australia. To indicate how in this time of disaster blame moved on a chainsaw, on this same day (February 16th) the State Department had just received a message from the Governor General of the East Indies deploring the fact that the Chinese had not brought relief to the English and Dutch defenders of Malaya and the Indies by starting a great offensive against the Japanese in China. He had charged that Chiang Kai shek had the means of doing so, but was waiting until the end of the war "probably for political reasons."

<sup>9</sup> *The Hinge of Fate*, pages 56-58.

<sup>10</sup> Kipling's "Mandalay" comes inevitably to mind.

<sup>11</sup> Message, Churchill to Roosevelt, February 7, 1942.

Churchill had informed the President and the British Chiefs of Staff that he agreed with Wavell that it was more important to try to hold Burma than Java. Therefore he had resumed his effort to send to Burma the only experienced and well-equipped Commonwealth forces that could be gotten there quickly. "It seems to me," he had summed up for the President, "that the most vital point at the moment is Rangoon, alone assuring contact with China."<sup>11</sup> Thus on February 20th he had asked the Prime Minister of Australia to consent to the diversion to Rangoon of the Australian division then at sea south of Ceylon, on the way home from the Middle East. He asked it as the only way to save a vital war situation—as the only force that could reach Rangoon in time to save its loss and the severance of the land route into China. To Wavell on the same day he had sent word that he was concentrating everything on defending or regaining Burma and the Burma Road.

Roosevelt, at Churchill's earnest plea, had also appealed to Curtin. He sent word that the American government was determined to send twenty-seven thousand fully equipped men to Australia in addition to those who were already on their way and that the American navy had in view operations to protect the Australian coast. For the sake of the whole Far Eastern war effort he asked that this Australian division be ordered to land. Before the answer was in, the need for this help had grown more extreme, and the chance that it could save the situation more doubtful. The retreating British Indian forces had met disaster at a river-crossing. As Churchill later wrote, this "seemed to settle the fate of Burma, where again the resources and arrangements of the Imperial Government were shown to be woefully inadequate."

Curtin had refused the combined appeals made by Churchill and Roosevelt. He had answered on February 22nd in substance that the Australian government had done all it could, and he thought it a great deal, to reinforce the ABDA area. The Japanese were advancing south to the Anzac area and all Australian forces might be needed to repel them. He had made the further points that since the Japanese seemed to have superior sea and air power it was doubtful whether the Australian division could be landed in Burma, and even if it were possible, it was doubtful whether it could save the situation, and in the event of failure it was even more doubtful whether it could ever be rescued from Burma. In sum, his answer had been that the action requested was not a reasonable hazard of war. Both the President and the Prime Minister had

<sup>11</sup> Message not dated probably February 17th. Churchill to Roosevelt. This and the other messages referred to in the following pages are in Chapters 8 and 9 of *The Hinge of Fate*.

repeated their appeals Curtin had repeated his refusals, adding that the imminent fall of Java meant "Australia's outer defenses are now quickly vanishing and our vulnerability is completely exposed" Churchill and the President had concluded that there was no further use in trying to get Australia to go to the—perhaps foolhardy—relief of Burma

Churchill, in telling the Governor of Burma of this final refusal, had told the British Indian forces to "Fight on" But how long could they? General Alexander, who had been in command at Dunkerque at the last, had now taken over from Wavell the direction of field operations in Burma Almost at once he decided that Rangoon had to be abandoned It was cut off by sea and was rapidly being encircled by the Japanese, who blocked the railway north to Prome There was a grave risk that if the British Indian forces did not start north at once their last way out would be cut Though badly hurt, most of them had gotten away in good order, with most of their transport and artillery With Rangoon lost, the battle had to be sustained by the troops who were in Burma and those who might still be brought in from India and China Their numbers were small, many were exhausted and down in spirit, and the natives were doing them harm The Allied air force was almost gone Chinese troops were by then moving in, both the Fifth and Sixth Armies, some were nearing the line of battle, which was four hundred miles south of the frontier of China

This was the situation Stilwell found when he took up his mission Under orders he flung himself into it He found the Chinese leaders "courteous, friendly, and planless" No agreement had been reached on a general plan for operations, and the Chinese troops in Burma were waiting for orders The Generalissimo, it was Stilwell's impression, was willing to fight, but "fed up with the British retreat and lethargy Also extremely suspicious of their motive and intentions"<sup>12</sup> After reading the message from Roosevelt which Stilwell bore with him, and listening to Stilwell's account of prospective American help, Chiang Kai shek remarked, "I told those army commanders [in Burma] not to take orders from anybody but you and wait till you've come"

But Stilwell soon found the path criss-crossed Within two days (March 8th) he was entering in his notes, "Got word from Shang Chen [director of the Foreign Affairs Bureau of the Chinese General Staff and liaison officer with Stilwell] he would be in with the staff setup At 7 00 he came, with the expected abortion, making everyone equal and

<sup>12</sup> *The Stilwell Papers* entry March 6 1942

with me the Chief of Staff for Allied forces alone " This was quite out of accord with what Stilwell and Marshall thought had been agreed on Chiang Kai shek became more indignant than ever about the British, accusing them of failing to tell the Chinese liaison officer before leaving Rangoon He was convinced that the British really did not intend to fight and he was unwilling to have them command the Chinese forces

Stilwell sought to do what he had been told to do and this discord As he tried, he himself began the argument with the Generalissimo that was to become standard during the next three years He thought the Japanese were exposed and that a quick, determined movement could succeed and possibly even recapture Rangoon Therefore he urged that all available forces start a counterattack at once His plan was to have the British forces hold on to their positions along the Irrawaddy as long as they could, while the Chinese were brought into battle But Chiang Kai-shek did not want his troops to rush into an offensive His idea was to maintain semi passive resistance, known as defense in depth, and then sometime later, perhaps, to try a cautious movement forward Though Stilwell found him "a stubborn bugger," he did get consent to move at least one more division in line of battle with the British, instead of keeping it in reserve in Mandalay as a garrison two hundred miles to the rear But Chiang Kai-shek specified that they would be expected to fight only as long as the British fought, and if the British retreated the Chinese were to do the same He asked Stilwell to remember that because of lack of arms, equipment, and transport, it took three Chinese divisions to deal with one Japanese division

Wavell, who as Supreme Commander in Chief in India was still concerned in the campaign in Burma, matched Chiang Kai-shek in pessimism His report to Churchill on March 19th as Stilwell was winning provisional and wavering consent to take Chinese forces into battle, stated, "I do not think we can count on holding Upper Burma for long if Japanese put in a determined attack Many troops [are] still short of equipment and shaken by experiences in lower Burma and remaining battalions of Burma Rifles of doubtful value There is little artillery Reinforcements in any strength impossible at present Chinese cooperation not easy They are distrustful of our fighting ability and inclined to hang back Not certain that they will compete with Japanese jungle tactics any more successfully than we have " The British and Indian governments were beginning to worry about the security of India Wavell was doubtful whether he could protect that country with the forces available to him Ground and air detachments that had been

assigned for Burma were therefore diverted to Ceylon, and the troops within India were kept there.

By the end of March Stilwell was forced to admit that it would not be possible to hold the existing line. But despite all deficiencies and hindrances he still thought that it could be made hard for the Japanese to get as far north as Mandalay. On March 25th, after several changes of mind, the Generalissimo authorized him to use still another division—three in all—to defend Mandalay from the south. In his notes for that date, Stilwell summarized the Generalissimo's message, "Use your judgment and give 'em hell." He added, in capital letters, "WHAT A RELIEF!"

But the military actions which Stilwell had in mind swiftly fell into disorder. The Japanese were bringing in substantial numbers of more troops and equipment by sea through Rangoon. The Chinese divisions did not move when and where expected. Stilwell attributed that to secret interference or cancellation of his orders. Rage and frustration speak in the entry that he made in his notes about this time, "Then the flood of letters begins [from Chiang Kai-shek]. To Tu. To Lin Wei. To me. All of them direct. I never see half of them. They direct all sorts of action and preparation with radical changes based on minor changes in the situation. The Chinese commanders are up and down. . . . They feel, of course, the urgent necessity of pleasing the Generalissimo, and if my suggestions or orders run counter to what they *think* he wants they offer endless objections. . . . I can't shoot them; I can't relieve them. . . . So the upshot of it is that I am the stooge who does the dirty work and takes the rap."<sup>13</sup>

It is not to be wondered that when Stilwell and Chiang Kai shek next met the occasion was not pleasant. Stilwell threatened to ask for his relief. The Generalissimo, either because he felt regret, or simply because he wanted to avoid a crisis with the American government, promised that it should not happen again. He went further. He said that he would go down to Burma again and make it very plain that Stilwell was to command. He did so quickly, and in what Stilwell thought was a satisfactory way. Even more, after talking with both Alexander and Stilwell, the Generalissimo agreed, or so Stilwell took it, that the Chinese forces would stand where they were and fight, no matter what. "Chiang Kai-shek," Stilwell entered in his notes for April 7th, "has come around to my contention: i.e., it is necessary to fight where we are, to hold the oil and food, we *must* fight a decisive battle now." Plans for an attack

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, undated entry, pages 76-77.



were made. But before they were completed, the British positions were lost, the Japanese drove them back again. Alexander asked Stilwell to come to his field quarters. There Stilwell found "Disaster and gloom. No fight left in British."<sup>14</sup>

On April 17th Churchill gave Harry Hopkins, who was in London, a copy of an appeal sent by the Generalissimo. It was an urgent and afflicted treatment of the situation. Chiang Kai-shek began by saying that he had just visited the Burma front, and there he found conditions which caused him to state, "In all my life of long military experience, I have seen nothing to compare with the deplorable unprepared state, confusion and degradation in the war area of Burma." He gave examples which did not reflect well on the British administration of the British Indian forces or of the Burmese natives. All, he found, were thinking of nothing but their own safety. The Chinese—this bill of complaint continued—had been fighting in Burma for almost a month. But they had not yet received a single machine. When the Chinese expeditionary force was sent it had been thought that they would be given Allied air help and protection. But they had not gotten it. The Chinese were sticking it out. But unless something was done quickly the Chinese officers and men would get a very bad impression of their Allies—an impression which would be hard to remove. The Burma war area, the Generalissimo's outburst ended, ought not to be considered as a subsidiary field of operations, since it was basic to the conduct of the war in the whole Far East. If Burma was lost, nothing would remain in the way of a Japanese threat to India, the line of transport and communications to China would be cut, and the base for land operations against Japan would be lost.

Churchill's depressed view of the situation was reflected in the message which on the next day (April 18th) he sent to Roosevelt: he did not, he said, know of anything more that could be done for General Alexander.

Stilwell was rushing part of his Chinese reserve forces to the support of the British. While he was doing so the Japanese struck at the end of the line held by the Chinese, the eastern end, and broke through and scattered them. They began to fall back northwards toward Lashio, a central station on the road from India. Stilwell tried hard to achieve some kind of orderly retreat to positions in North Burma which could be held until the heavy rains came. But it turned into a disorganized rout. The Japanese moved on wheels and controlled the air. They had

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* entry April 15, 1942

captured by then the airfields in Burma from which the British and American planes had operated. The British air squadrons and the American Volunteer Group could carry on their hard fight no longer.

While Stilwell was struggling back with his Chinese troops the Japanese seized Lashio on April 29th. The Burma Road, the escape road to China, was cut. The Japanese forces had traveled three hundred miles in eighteen days, outracing the torrential rains which the Allied commanders had hoped would bog them down in sticky red mud and jungle floods. Stilwell and a small band began their trudge through the jungle and over the mountains from Burma to India "ahead of the Chinese horde." On arriving in New Delhi, three weeks later, the General said to the press, "I claim we got a hell of a beating. We got run out of Burma and it's humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back and retake it."

One night (May 10th) while up in the hills, Stilwell had hastily jotted down a list of the reasons to which he attributed the defeat. It was a long one: hostile population, no air service, Japanese initiative, inferior equipment, inadequate ammunition, inadequate transport, no supply set up, improvised medical service, stupid, gutless command, interference by Chiang Kai shek, British mess on the railway, rotten communications, British defeatist attitude, vulnerable tactical situation.

Stilwell's critics—and an American, General Chennault, was among the most bitter of them—thought he should have taken these matters into account before he pulled the Chinese armies into the campaign. His answers, plainly suggested by his papers, would have been first, that the battle could have been won despite them, and, second, that it was the only chance to keep China as an active participant in the war. To which perhaps he might have added another thought: after all, Japan had been compelled to use in Burma forces which otherwise might have been sent toward India, Australia, or elsewhere. This was the best way in which China could at the time contribute what it had—men—to the Allied cause.

## After the Defeat in Burma

WHAT a trail of harm this debacle left behind!

The last remnants of the ABDA plan and organization were smashed.

Much of the small supply of heavy weapons of the Chinese armies was lost. All usable land and sea routes over which men, weapons, and supplies could be brought into China were barred. The only way there after by which the Chinese could procure anything from outside was by air—from India over the high Himalayas. More and more planes, skilled airmen, material, and energy had to be devoted to it. Even so, this system of transport remained inadequate, and the limitations on supply long postponed the chance of so building up Chinese forces that they might push back the Japanese army in China. The defending people and government of free China were forced to get along without main producing areas of food, raw materials, and fabricated goods.

All idea that China could be turned into a main theater of ground warfare had to be put aside. But the hopes of using it as a land base for air measures against Japanese shipping and outposts, and later even against Japan itself, survived.

The Chinese government had to stay a refugee government, in its distant mountain capital, far away from the big cities and ports of the east. This made it easier for the Communist movement in the north to recruit throughout China.

In Chungking gloom deepened. Ever since the forced retreat to this inland town, the government had lived on the wishful belief that when the United States went to war with Japan all this would change, that it would be quickly succored. Now—five months later—it seemed worse off than ever, more confined and harassed, shaken by the loss of the armies and the closing of the Burma Road. It was hard to be cheerful there even when the news was fair, very hard when it was bad. Living conditions for foreigners as well as Chinese were wearing. It was hot and damp during the summer, and a fog stayed over the city and nearby hills through the chilling winter. Japanese bombing planes forced every one into shelters for long hours of the day. Mud and dirt were everywhere, there was not enough clothing and food. Isolation from the foreign world was almost complete.

The Chinese government seemed able to do little to relieve the situation. Almost all foreign witnesses agreed that the Chinese government

seemed even less able than before to organize its forces, to improve command in the army or the conduct of civil government, to expel fear and self seeking, or cure the spirit of division. Chiang Kai-shek was issuing laws and decrees for the fuller use of the combat resources of China and the relief of the suffering. But these were without vitality. Few believed that they would be put into effect, or, if they were, that they would improve matters. The Chinese officials seemed more avid for foreign aid and support, and more convinced that they were entitled to it. Control over provincial commanders and regimes weakened, and the Generalissimo felt an increasing compulsion to avoid conflict with them.

It was not only general misery and weakness that spoke, however, during the months right after the rout in Burma. There was an active fear that Japan would soon strike harder than ever at China. During May the Japanese had begun to move up the Burma Road one hundred thousand strong with tanks, artillery, and air support. Their first object, it was judged probable, would be India. But they might also cross into China, drive on to Kunming, and from there bomb Chungking out of existence. At the same time the Japanese armies in the north might go on the offensive. Soong sketched out the dreaded possibilities in a letter written to Hopkins even before the end had come in Burma, telling him that "On April 16th a friend in Chungking in whose objective judgment I have great faith cabled me that the Japanese threaten to attack the most important strategic centers. 'The situation looks ominous. I personally believe that in May or June the Japanese will attack Changsha and Hengyang [in Hunan Province] and at the same time attack Sian [in Honan Province]' " " Even the more assured officials—American as well as Chinese—were greatly worried as to whether the available Chinese forces could deal with these dangers.<sup>1</sup> Some of the field commanders were not trusted. The troops in the south were of

<sup>1</sup> *Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History*, Robert E. Sherwood, 1948, pages 514-515. Sian is not in Honan but in Shensi Province.

<sup>2</sup> On May 8th Gauss reported that General Magruder had been talking to him about the possibility—if not the probability—that the American military mission in China would be forced to withdraw from Chungking and maybe from China itself. Gauss had cautioned against any action which would cause the Chinese to suspect that we lacked confidence in the Chinese government and army. The State Department discussed the matter with General Marshall, urging him to discourage any preparations for withdrawal. Marshall cabled the American representatives in Chungking that it remained the policy of the War Department to give maximum practicable aid to China; that in view of the reverses in Burma, it was more important than ever to maintain an attitude of 'calm optimism' regarding the future of China; nothing should be done to imply that our military personnel would be evacuated.

poor quality and had little equipment, the people of Yunnan were of no help

The British took the rout more calmly than the Americans or Chinese—perhaps because they had already suffered greater ones and were facing more dangerous risks elsewhere. Perhaps also the edge of defeat was dulled for them because India was not lost. There is evident satisfaction in the comment with which Churchill concludes his telling of Alexander's success in bringing the remnants of his forces safely back into India (to Imphal where they could protect the frontier), "The road to India was barred."<sup>3</sup>

The Chinese (by which is meant Chiang Kai shek, his government, and his military commanders) found everyone and everything to blame except themselves. To three things in particular they attributed the disaster: that so little in the way of war equipment had been given to their forces, particularly no planes and no artillery, that the British commanders had mismanaged the fight, and the British Indian forces had failed to do their part, that Stilwell had rashly risked the Chinese armies.

These opinions Chiang Kai shek and his associates did not keep to themselves or forget quickly. But they refrained from criticism of the American government and managed to subdue the bitterness in their complaints. The defeat in Burma made them even more dependent on the United States than before. They retained their belief that whatever the American government did—or failed to do—was inspired by good will for China and the determination to have it emerge from its troubles. But their discontent found vent upon Stilwell. They began to mark him as the cause of their tribulations. He had overcome their fears and doubts about engaging so fully in the defense of Burma, he had disputed their view that the Japanese were too strong, and he had scorned their wish to stay on the defensive. His memos and comments exposed their inside deals and weaknesses, and blamed them for conditions and facts for which they preferred to blame others. He had won little for them in Washington to compensate for these trials. His appointment had failed to bring with it as quick or as much aid as they had hoped. In sum, most governing Chinese officials turned against Stilwell for every reason that ill fortune can summon.

As for Stilwell, his was the unrelaxing will to keep China active in the war. He saw in Burma the only chance to engage the large Chinese

<sup>3</sup> *The Hinge of Fate*, page 171

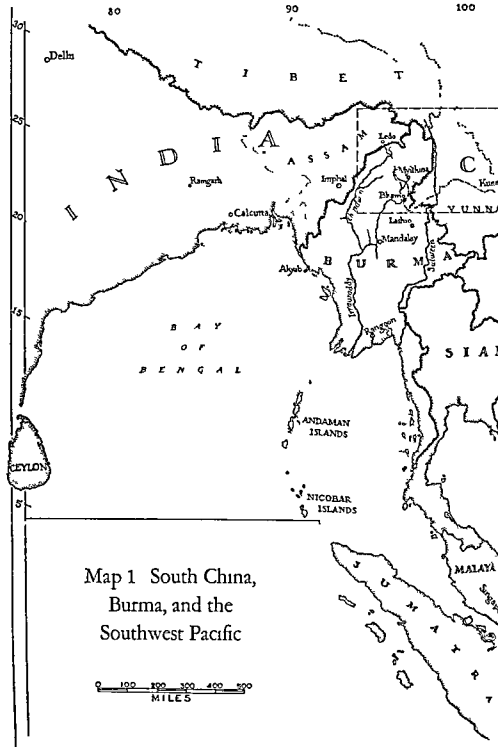
armies, in concert with the Indian, against the Japanese until more combat resources became available from other theaters of war. But he found that many of the Chinese officials and officers, tired and self-sparing, longed to have the next round of battle fought out by men of other countries, with the great planes and guns which the Chinese did not have.

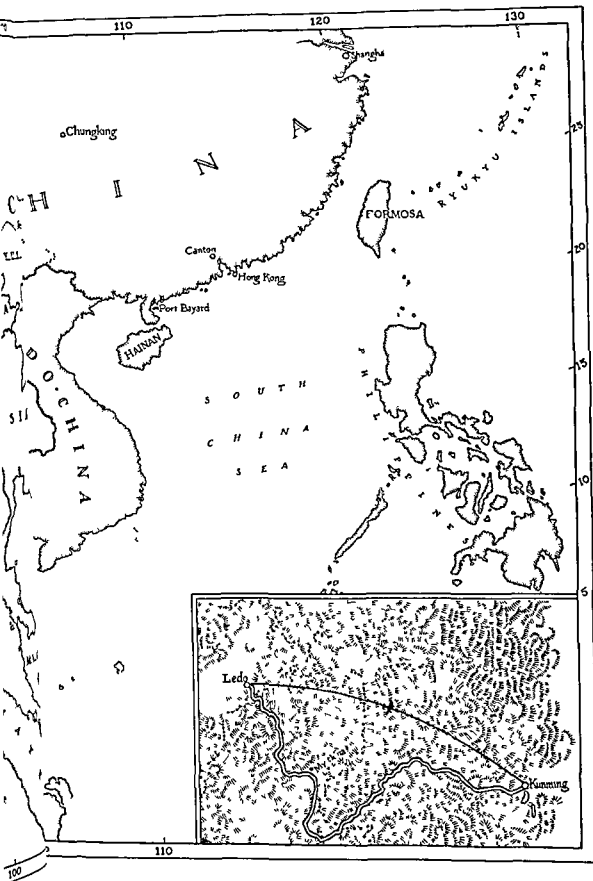
Stilwell's opinions of the Chinese government and military command are etched in abusive acid in his notebooks and messages to Washington. His state of mind is recorded in an entry in his notes made on June 19th just after he had come out of the Burma jungles and talked with Chiang Kai-shek. "The Chinese Government is a structure based on fear and favor, in the hands of an ignorant, arbitrary, stubborn man. Only outside influence can do anything for China—either enemy action will smash her or some regenerative idea must be formed and put into effect at once." They, he thought, looked at the war as a game of chess—a continuation or extension of self-seeking activity. For the ways in which the Chinese military organization had behaved during the Burma campaign Stilwell had nothing but condemnation. In his blazing memory, the Generalissimo had failed to keep his promise to allow him to command the Chinese army in Burma, and had confused the whole conduct of the campaign by his secret orders. Most of the Chinese generals he regarded as incompetent, and more often than not, he believed, officers ignored and oppressed the men under them. Only the soldiers had merit.

Stilwell's views, vigorously conveyed, influenced estimates—especially in the Pentagon Building—of what might be expected of China in the war, and what use the Chinese forces would make of combat weapons greatly needed elsewhere. They were noted in the White House—but with reserve. The President and Hopkins, and Hull in the State Department, all felt it essential to preserve a basically friendly attitude toward the Chinese government. They could not let it be too deeply scarred by hard feelings following one military defeat. Moreover, it may be surmised that the President was inclined to think that there was some justice in Chiang Kai-shek's claims for more help and for his view that the war in China should be carried on largely from the air.

For this view General Chennault was an aroused advocate. He shared the Generalissimo's grievances—early and later—over the lag in air action in China, and over promises that were not carried out. The

\* *The Stilwell Papers* entry June 19 1942







American Volunteer Group had been fighting in China under a contract with the Chinese government that was due to expire in July Chiang Kai shek had agreed to dissolve this unit in return for a promise of a complete U S fighter group and other types of planes Those members who wished were to be absorbed in the Tenth Air Force, which was then based in India and was under Stilwell's command Chennault was named head of the China Air Task Force, a segment of the Tenth Air Force But the means which he had reason to expect did not arrive on time, and his orders were delayed Stilwell himself was trying his angry best to get better results from the Tenth Air Force But in the words of two well informed students of these military matters, these disappointments "embarrassed Stilwell in his relations with the Generalissimo and Chennault, who mistakenly believed that Stilwell was indifferent to the possibilities of China based air power"<sup>3</sup>

Beyond such causes of grudge against Stilwell, Chennault thought Stilwell's military judgment and plans bad His ideas of how the fight in China ought to be conducted appealed to the Chiang Kai shek circle, with whom he was on terms of admiring intimacy Upheld by them, and sometimes speaking for them, he contested Stilwell's strategy and programs, and became an active rival for American support As time went on, he did all he could to have his ideas known in Washington It may be said—looking forward—that American relations with China during the next two years went along on two divided lanes one, the lane of communication between Chiang Kai shek and the White House was kept smoothly paved, the other, the lane of military communication which ran through Stilwell, was rough and cracked with tension

It was the State Department that amid these agitations seemed to plead China's case for sympathy and help most warmly Perhaps this was easier for it to do because it did not have to face the direct responsibility if battles elsewhere were lost as a result of quickening help for China The views it put forth are well indicated in a memo of May 20th written by Stanley Hornbeck, then adviser on Far Eastern Political Relations

"Reports from our own sources in China, sent from or through Chungking, have breathed a sense of frustration and defeatism The feeling of our officials and officers reflects in some measure the feeling of the Chinese circles in which they move The Chinese have seen the United States and Great Britain sustain military defeats They have seen the Japanese gaining victories elsewhere and closing in on China,

<sup>3</sup> Sunderland Romanus manuscript pt Vol 1

they have seen the failure of the Cripps mission in India and they have sensed the ineptitude of British military and political operations in the Far Eastern theatre and the Indian Ocean area, they have heard and have rejoiced in American promises that we would get goods into China and they have seen that the goods do not arrive, they are now hearing that the goods do not arrive because we cannot send them and that we cannot send them because (a) high mountains are an obstacle and (b) we and the British need for other fronts (British and Russian) all planes available and therefore cannot spare more than a couple dozen (three dozen at the outside) transport planes for traffic into and out of Chungking

"China has no air force, is woefully lacking in artillery and anti aircraft, is short on machine guns and has no large reserves of small arms and ammunition Chinese morale has been preserved for many months past by expectation of aid from the United States and Great Britain and assurances that she shall have aid by the United States So long as the Chinese remain confident that such aid is going to reach them, there is a fair chance of their morale holding up and their resistance continuing But let once the point be reached, at which they reach a conclusion that aid cannot or will not reach them, that their hope and confidence will evaporate, at and from that point there will be no reason for them not to say to themselves that the chance of the United Nations defeating Hitler and Japan is certainly not better than 50/50 and the sensible course for them to follow is to make with Japan the best compromise possible

"From now on there is only one way by which we can make sure of maintaining China's confidence, we must deliver goods Deliveries can be made and an artery of communication between China and us can be maintained if we will put into the job of creating and maintaining an air transport service such courage, such ingenuity and such effort as we have been and are putting into a variety of operations in other places and other contexts The number of planes needed for doing this job is ridiculously small in comparison with the relatively huge numbers that we are sending to other fronts Is there not something wrong about a strategy which in theory or in practice would call for investing everything in several scattered theaters and investing absolutely nothing in a theater which, if occupied by the enemy, would mean the loss of a useful ally and the acquisition by the enemy of that prize which has been the major objective of political and military operations on his part for a period of nearly 50 years"

The State Department entered its observations in the contest for American assistance. But it was not bold, and it did not at this time have much influence in top councils. It could flutter about strategy but could not make it. Even so its sympathetic temper, exemplified by Hull, helped to soften differences and sustain friendship.

In short, the will of the American government to keep China in the war remained firm and its ultimate purpose friendly and faithful. But rather than imperil vital military situations elsewhere in order to hasten its rescue, we left China well toward the end of the line of our effort.

During June, Chiang Kai shek asked for the third time that China be given a place on the Munitions Assignment Board which allocated military equipment among the Allies. This request was again politely parried. But plans were approved to satisfy the Generalissimo's prime wish for greater air support. The United States Tenth Air Force would, he was again told, get more bombers and fighters. The main bases of operations were to be moved to China, the fighters and medium bombers at once, the heavy bombers later. More and better planes were also to be assigned to the air transport route over the Hump. Due to many causes, the tonnage being brought into China was pitifully small: only eighty tons in May, one hundred and six in June, seventy three in July.<sup>6</sup>

But once again, necessity crowded against wish and intention. In Egypt, Tobruk was lost (on June 21st) with frightening shock, and the British were in full retreat with their backs against the Suez Canal. As the Middle East went, so would India go, the British military thought.<sup>7</sup> The Russians were maintaining a desperate defense, and ways were being sought to hinder the German eastward drive.<sup>8</sup> The American military authorities thought these crises much more acute and decisive than anything that could happen in China. Thus they canceled part of the programs underway for enlarging the air activity in and for China. They did it because they felt they had to, knowing well that once again the Chinese government would think itself hurt and badly treated.<sup>9</sup> The Americans had already begun to repossess the stock piles

<sup>6</sup> Sunderland Romanus manuscript Vol. 1

<sup>7</sup> *The Army Air Forces in World War II* Vol. II Europe Torch to Pointblank page 15

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* page 9

<sup>9</sup> The Chinese government was smarting at the time over the fact that on signing (on May 26th) a twenty year Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and the Soviet Union the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden had remarked that the destiny of the world thereupon lay in the hands of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union.

of Lend Lease supplies and equipment which had been accumulated in the United States and India for China, but could not be moved into China after the Burma Road was closed. They were needed elsewhere at once. The Chinese government reluctantly consented to the transfer.<sup>10</sup>

On June 24th Stilwell received instructions from Washington. "Brereton [Commander Tenth Air Force] will come at once to the Middle East with available heavy bombers with mission to assist Auchinleck."<sup>11</sup> The bombers were wanted to smash up the Axis supply route from Italy to Africa. Simultaneously another squadron of light bombers en route to China was detained in Egypt. And a number of transport aircraft already in service on the Assam-China air line with needed personnel were also ordered out to the Near East. These orders, decided at a White House conference, were issued without prior notice to the Generalissimo.

On being told of them, Stilwell wrote in his diary, "Now what can I say to the Gmo? We fail in *all* our commitments, and blithely tell him to just carry on, old top."<sup>12</sup> Chiang Kai shek had been brooding and fretting over his failure to receive the help he thought due China. His response to this latest news that China's needs again would have to yield to others is shown by the entry which Stilwell made in his notes the next day. "In any case, I was to radio and ask for Yes or No on the question 'Is the U.S. interested in maintaining the China Theatre?'"<sup>13</sup> Madame Chiang Kai shek, who was present, underscored the query by remarking that the Generalissimo in the speech he was to give to mark the end of the fifth year of the war against Japan, July 7th, would have to tell the truth. "[He] wants a yes or no answer to whether the Allies consider this theatre necessary and will support it."<sup>14</sup> Stilwell trans

<sup>10</sup> Letter, Soong to Assistant Secretary of War McCloy, May 21, 1942.

<sup>11</sup> The Brereton Diaries, entry, June 24, 1942.

<sup>12</sup> *The Stilwell Papers*, entry, June 25, 1942.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, entry, June 26, 1942.

<sup>14</sup> From American minutes of this talk. According to the Chinese minutes, at one point the Generalissimo blamed Stilwell. He said that since President Roosevelt in his telegram promised to supply China with planes and war materials she needs "what is being done amounts to disobedience of his orders. Less than ten per cent of what he had agreed to give China has been supplied. I do not entertain any doubt that the President is sincere. What has been done is perhaps without his consent or knowledge. As Chief of Staff to me, you are responsible for seeing to it that the promised material is forthcoming." Sunderland and Romanus note in this connection references made by Chiang Kai shek and Madame Chiang Kai shek to current messages from Soong—of which Stilwell was ignorant; these apparently were the basis of the impression expressed by the Generalissimo and the suspicion that the measures reducing support for China were being made on Stilwell's orders or suggestions.

mitted the question to Washington. Roosevelt's first response (June 27th) Stilwell found "quiet and dignified and promised nothing"<sup>15</sup>

Then, on the 29th, Chiang Kai shek put down in writing his ideas of the minimum help to which China was entitled.<sup>16</sup> He gave Stilwell a note for transmission to Washington, stating "Three minimum requirements essential for the maintenance of the Chinese Theatre of War". They were

1 Three American divisions to arrive in India between August and September to cooperate with Chinese forces in establishing communications through Burma

2 Beginning in August, the Air Force should have five hundred planes in continuous combat operations and maintain that strength

3 From August on, monthly transport deliveries over the Hump to be at least five thousand tons

This was fifty times the volume then coming by air into China, and about ten times the volume that Stilwell reckoned could be brought in by a hundred planes—more than the Chinese airfields could then accommodate

The policy makers in Washington recognized that the trouble with the Generalissimo was serious, perhaps critical. Soong, the Foreign Minister, had previously urged Harry Hopkins to accept the Generalissimo's invitation to visit him. At the end of June, Chiang Kai shek himself asked the President to send Hopkins, or some other similarly situated person, to confer with him. Hopkins could not be spared and was not in fit shape to take the trip. When Chiang Kai shek's protests came in, the President instead sent Lauchlin Currie, one of his administrative assistants. During late July and early August he had twelve long talks with Chiang Kai shek and was able to report fully on the state of mind and state of defense of Free China. He found the Chinese American attachment coming loose. He thought the Generalissimo and the Chinese very wearied, but nowhere did he detect "the slightest sign of defeatism or desire to give up the struggle". He concluded that Stilwell ought to be relieved, and so advised the President. His visit was helpful both in soothing feelings and in stimulating the flow of help to China.

<sup>15</sup> *The Stilwell Papers* entry July 1 1942

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* and Sunderland Romanus manuscript Vol. 1

## Ardors and Refusals: During the Rest of 1942

BUT the actual military aid given during the rest of 1942 was small. Except for the portion that could be wrested from more urgent needs, satisfaction of the demands made by the Generalissimo was deferred. For, grave as the wants of China were, the energies of the American government centered elsewhere. Other situations and plans were to the fore: the crucial battles in the Eastern Mediterranean and on the eastern front in Europe, the projected invasion of North Africa, the protection of Australia, and the first counteractions in the southwest and central Pacific.

While waiting for Washington to decide, in the face of these competing requirements, what means it could provide for the war in China, Stilwell devoted himself to the two tasks which the War Department most wanted done: (1) to plan for, and get started as soon as it could be managed, a campaign to recapture Burma, (2) to improve the combat efficiency of the Chinese army.

The operation which he proposed to the Generalissimo looked not only toward the recapture of North Burma and the reopening of the Burma Road, but also to reentry into the port of Rangoon.<sup>1</sup> No other measures, he thought, in the China Burma India theater might achieve as much at so little cost. But he was aware that neither the Chinese nor the British would eagerly consent to engage upon it. There was method in his mind. He thought to gain his way by first extracting from the War Department a promise to provide necessary minimum means for this plan, then, using this conditional promise of help as a lure, to join with the War Department to get the Chinese and British to go ahead.

At the same time Stilwell did his utmost to impel the Chinese government into a reorganization of its army. That army was a coalition army rather than a unified national force. Most of the divisions were bands of lightly armed and poorly trained men, but tough and often courageous, with allegiance to their commanders. Their pay was extremely small and they were sometimes cheated of part of it. The supply of food for many divisions was irregular. Conscription was

<sup>1</sup> Stilwell memo, July 10, 1942. Subject: What is the Future of the China War Theatre? and Plan for Retaking Burma; and memo to Generalissimo Chiang Kai shek, July 18, Subject: Suggested Letter from the Generalissimo to the President. Sunderland Romanus manuscript.

rough. There were many desertions and much sickness. Both the system of command and the use of the forces were weakened in order to conform to the intricate pattern of influence within the government. Various area commanders were also provincial governors. The forces were widely dispersed for a variety of reasons, some poor. Divisions were kept in locations where they were of little combat use because local commanders would not agree to their departure, or just to maintain the influence of the Central Government, or because Chiang Kai-shek feared they might defect if moved. The National Military Council was supposed to coordinate action in threatened areas but was not effective. It acted more like the national committee of an American political party than a military organization.

All this Stilwell tried to get changed, and quickly. Out of the three hundred odd divisions of which some thirty were directly under the Central Government, he wanted to form a much smaller force of the best, retrain, reequip, and feed them. Then he wanted to use them where they could do the most good in the war against the Japanese. An entry in his notes, made after he had spent some months trying to achieve this, gives the run of his impressions:

"Troubles of a Peanut dictator. At first the Peanut thought that military and political functions could not be separated, so he combined the authority under the military commanders. Now he finds that it makes the boys too powerful, and he's been trying for a year to shake them loose, without success in Hupeh . . . Hunan . . . Honan . . . Kansu . . . Shansi . . . Chekiang . . . Yunnan.

"The way it works is by threat. The Peanut wants to shake Hsueh Yueh [Governor and Commander in Chief in Hunan] loose. If he [Chiang Kai-shek] pulls out troops Hsueh squawks, 'I cannot be responsible for the security of my area,' and he might even arrange for a Jap reaction. The under-strappers are told to pressurize, and a flood of protest reaches various officials of the Central Government. They then tell the Peanut opposition is very strong, and the forcing the issue might cause dirty work. So the Peanut lays off and waits. The plain fact is that he doesn't dare to take vigorous action—they are sure to be sulky and they may gang up. His best cards are the air force, the artillery, and the ten armies whose training is under the Central Government.

"Why doesn't the little dummy realize that his only hope is the 30-division plan, and the creation of a separate, efficient, well-equipped, and well trained force?"

<sup>2</sup> *The Stilwell Papers*, entry, October 5, 1942

As Stilwell found how many reasons the Chinese officials had for taking their time or keeping on with their old ways, what was left of his patience was sorely tried

Chiang Kai shek was willing to discuss all the matters that any and all branches of the American government insisted were important to win China's battle the reorganization of the army, the assignment of command, the allocation of troops for a Burma operation, more effective measures of economic and financial control, and social justice But on all these he had his own problems and designs, his own pace, and his own self-assurances

The Generalissimo thought Stilwell and the War Department were demanding too much of China too soon, while offering too little But he did not stand on the three minimum demands which he had presented in June He agreed to go along with Stilwell's plan to retake Burma provided (1) as much as one American combat division was sent, and (2) the American combat air force and air transport service were substantially increased, and (3) when the land campaign started the British navy and air force attacked the Andaman Islands (which were in the Bay of Bengal about one hundred and twenty miles south of Rangoon) and made a landing at Rangoon He wanted to take no chances that the Japanese could reinforce through that port In sum, he insisted that the assault on Burma must be not only by land from China and India, but by sea from the south <sup>2</sup> For such a campaign China would provide the divisions whose training at Ramgarh in India was beginning (known as the Ledo Force) and other troops presently to be assembled in the province of Yunnan, near the frontier of Burma (known as the Yoke Force)

The American and British Combined Chiefs of Staff pondered over the possibilities, in touch with Soong in Washington The main elements and phases of the decisions that followed are sufficiently indicated by entries in Stilwell's notes

September 21, 1942 "Dinner at Chiang Kai shek's Everything [of India training plan] approved Reinforcements for Ramgarh OK We can pick our man, too That's the way it goes—you worry yourself sick for weeks and struggle around, and then suddenly it all crystallizes in a moment We are doing our damndest to help him, and he makes his approval look like a tremendous concession "

September 27, 1942 "At last Answer [from Washington] to Three

<sup>2</sup> Letter General Shang Chen to Stilwell August 1, 1942



Demands scaled down 265 combat planes, 100 transports No ground troops Tonnage would be built up to 5,000 if, as, and when 'Appreciate your cooperation' 'Will assist at Ramgarh' It amounts to doing *nothing* more than at present I suppose I am to kid them into reorganizing the Army [Forces for the] Burma [offensive] will be the Ramgarh Detachment, the Tenth Air Force, the Yunnan mob, and a 'limited British detachment' In other words, what we've got How *very* generous "

October 2, 1942 "———arrived with mail and news Washington is just what we've thought, one big mess This theater kaput No help coming General impression, pessimistic Major strategic effort not in the Pacific Henry [Stimson] sympathetic, but no offer of help Chief of Staff says no ground troops McCloy noncommittal "

Stilwell presented to Chiang Kai shek on the 13th of October the President's formal answer to the modified three demands It gave more and demanded less than had been expected No American combat troops were to be sent to Burma But the President offered (1) about five hundred aircraft for a larger United States air force in the China Theater, and one hundred transport planes to be operated in the Hump Route by early 1943 (2) Lend Lease help to reorganize and equip the Chinese divisions in India (3) Such Lend Lease equipment as could be brought over the Hump for the Chinese divisions in China

The Chinese government took this answer in good part But its idea of what was needed before engaging in a Burma campaign had not changed, the same requirements which Chiang Kai shek had defined before were written into the plan which he now authorized Stilwell to discuss with the Americans and British Even so, Stilwell was briefly pleased enough to enter in his notes on October 14th that the Chinese plan looked good, and that the Generalissimo was encouraging him to hurry with the training of the Chinese troops in India—"Giving you full authority in India Be sure and keep strict discipline " "

Having also received further guidance from Washington, Stilwell flew down to New Delhi to get the British views At first (October 17 19) he found Wavell reserved, and cool even to the Ramgarh training project—his reasons being the inadequacy of all forms of transport, the insufficient supply of both food and water, and fear that the demands of the Chinese forces would hinder the development of the Indian armies<sup>5</sup> Wavell had in mind only a limited action, short of the capture

<sup>4</sup> *The Stilwell Papers* entry October 14 1942

<sup>5</sup> Quite possibly Wavell was merely putting forward objections held by the govern

of Rangoon. But for reasons not identified—probably new word from London—Wavell's answers abruptly changed. As recorded in an undated entry in Stilwell's diary [but somewhere between October 18th and 24th, New Delhi] "Remarkable change. They will give us a sector at Ledo. They will supply us. They can move the Chinese up [to the North Burma front] in time to go in. Everything is lovely again, so obviously George [Marshall] has turned on the heat. Wavell's plan fits in fairly well with mine." After this talk the British authorities in India zealously began to plan for an offensive in Burma, and to take care of the needs of the Chinese divisions at Ramgarh. But in actual fact they still were not willing to agree to a campaign as large as the one Stilwell wished, nor to contribute as much as the Chinese wanted.

At this juncture Stilwell found a supporter in Soong, who was back in China. This was unexpected, for Stilwell thought, and not without some reason, that the earlier reports and advice which Soong had sent from Washington depreciated, and in some instances, distorted his ideas. Marshall and Stimson, it is now known, had before Soong's departure reviewed with him Stilwell's problems, and the reasons why he had had to be troublesome—"a fighting military leader, not just a smooth diplomatic type." The great issue, they explained to him, in their view was Burma, not merely a harmonious group at Chungking, that meant a properly trained force at Ramgarh, an improved and selected Chinese force in Yunnan, and a practical basis of cooperation with the British in such an operation—in other words—Stilwell.\*

Stilwell, back in Chungking, told the Generalissimo of Wavell's plan for a limited offensive, making clear that Wavell had not promised that the British would make an amphibious attack on Rangoon. The Generalissimo said by February 1943 he would be ready to use some twenty divisions in the operations. But once again he said that this was only on condition that the Allied sea and air forces were present in strength to control the Bay of Bengal and prevent Japan from using the port of

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ment of India. General Marshall discussed the problem with Marshal Sir John Dill, of the Joint Staff Mission to Washington. Dill explained that the government of India was not enthusiastic about the Ramgarh plan because it thought Chiang Kai shek had been too close to Indian nationalist opinion and feared that if there should be domestic trouble within India the Chinese might side with the Congress Party, and also because it did not relish the idea of the contrast between a Chinese army equipped by Lend Lease supplies and Indian forces. Letters: Dill to Marshall, October 13th and 19th, Sunderland Romanus manuscript, Vol. 1.

\* As recounted later by Marshall in memo to the President, November 5, 1942, in Sunderland Romanus manuscript, Vol. 1.

could first be weakened by attack from the air, and then crushed by converging assaults. Chennault's view of how Japan was to be beaten was like an easily opened fan: to drive the Japanese air force north of the Yangtze valley, then let the bombers cut Japanese sea routes to the south, and strike Japan proper as its aerial defense weakened, by these measures the Japanese forces in China and the Southwest Pacific would be cut off. Then the Chinese army, the American navy, and MacArthur's troops could defeat them at small cost.<sup>9</sup> All this Chennault thought could be done—or very well begun—with a relatively small force of fighters and bombers.<sup>10</sup> Thus he argued, and Chiang Kai-shek heard him gladly, that American and Chinese efforts should be concentrated on building up the American combat air force operation in China, and on expanding the transport route over the Hump, rather than on a land campaign to recapture Burma. This argument was to recur with increasing intensity, in a variety of military forms and forums during the coming months.<sup>11</sup>

On December 28th Chiang Kai-shek drew the issue firmly. He informed the President that while the Chinese forces would be ready in March to advance into Burma they would not do so unless the British threw themselves into the operations on sea as well as land. The President tried to keep the Generalissimo committed to some spring campaign in Burma if only a limited one. In his answer of January 2, 1943 he argued that it was more important for China that the Burma Road be opened than that the whole of Burma be reoccupied, and therefore Chinese efforts should not be delayed. He promised to discuss the situation at once with the highest Allied authorities. He did, the British answer remained the same: they did not have the necessary forces to undertake large fleet operations in the Bay of Bengal or any substantial amphibious attack either at the Andaman Islands or at Rangoon, and they would not be forced prematurely into these actions by Chiang Kai-shek.

The American government had no new inducement or assurance to offer the Generalissimo in the recommended venture. Chiang Kai-shek was not to be swayed, he refused to go ahead. He summarized his rea-

<sup>9</sup> As explained in a letter for the President which Chennault gave Wendell Willkie, October 8, 1941.

<sup>10</sup> As specified in the Willkie letter, one hundred and five fighters, thirty medium bombers and twelve heavy bombers kept up to full strength. Later on, Chennault increased his estimates of force needed and supply requirements.

<sup>11</sup> When Stilwell had first presented his plan in July, Gauss had predicted that it could not be realized at that time, and had expressed the opinion that the most substantial contribution we could make to China then and there would be to increase the combat air force and air transport supply service.

sons in another message to the President (January 8th) that the Japanese were now well fortified in Burma and would fight obstinately, that the Chinese supply lines were not good enough, that the forces which the British intended to use were inadequate, that in order to be reasonably assured of success a combined land and sea borne operation was essential, and that he could not risk defeat since another failure in Burma would be disastrous. Instead, he suggested a large early air offensive.

Stilwell's diary entry for that day, January 8th, is headed "Black Friday" and under it he wrote, "What a break for the Limeys. Just what they wanted. Now they will quit, and the Chinese will quit, and the god-dam Americans can go ahead and fight. Chennault's blatting has put us in a spot, he's talked so much about what he can do that now they are going to let him do it."

Again on January 9th the President urged Chiang Kai shek to stay his final decision until he talked with Churchill, whom he was soon to meet [at Casablanca]. Chiang Kai shek paused. He allowed Stilwell to work with what he had to improve the forces at Ramgarh and to struggle with the Yoke forces in Yunnan, and he waited until, as he had expressed it in his message to the President of January 8th, "our Allies are ready."

The flaw in that attitude, it may be remarked, was that the Chinese were doing too little of what they could do for themselves. This failure, which prolonged itself, meant that the Chinese government later lacked the strength to play an important part in the defeat of Japan, and to take control of China after Japan was beaten. Stilwell's effort to arouse the Chinese government to realize what must be done, and why, is well set forth in one of the memos which he presented as Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo.

"This is our opportunity to equip and train a force that will make China strong and safe. The opportunity must be seized while the supply of weapons is available. If the first 30-Division Plan is carried out and the force used offensively, I will have a basis for demanding the equipment for another thirty divisions.

"I recommend that the program for the Y Force be pushed, that the concentration of the troops be expedited, that General Ch'en Ch'eng be relieved of all other duties at once, that any necessary changes in Armies for the Y Force be made at once, that financial arrangements be authorized, and that the training program be approved. Also that the units of the second 30-Division Plan be designated, that their re-

organization and re-equipping be started at an early date, and that a plan of training similar to that proposed for the first thirty divisions be adopted

"If these things are done now, by next fall the first thirty divisions should be an efficient field force, and the second thirty divisions should be well advanced in tactical training. With a supply line open, both groups could be equipped promptly with their weapons, and from then on China would have nothing to fear from the Japanese. Without such a definite plan, there will be difficulty in continuing the present flow of supplies from the United States, let alone increasing it materially, as I am trying to do at present."<sup>12</sup>

The conferences at Casablanca were confirming the view that the Chinese government ought to understand the importance of making a singleminded, utmost effort to retrieve the situation in Burma, with what limited help could be given it right away.

<sup>12</sup> Memo, Stilwell for Generalissimo 28 Jan 1943. Stilwell Document, OCMH. This was prepared after discussions with Soong and General Chen, and in accord with Stilwell's communications with Marshall.

## How Best to Keep China in the War: The Dark Winter of 1942-1943

ROOSEVELT and Churchill, their spirits high, shared the sunshine of Casablanca (January 14th 23rd) with their invading forces. Stalin had been asked to join them, but he had said he could not come because of the battle situation on the Eastern Front. Chiang Kai-shek had not been asked, and again he felt slighted. Stilwell had been trying to find a way of meeting his wish to share in main strategic decisions affecting China. He had suggested to Marshall that the Combined Chiefs of Staff form a subcommittee for Pacific operations, on which China would have a place. But it was judged that this would create more problems than it solved.

The American and British military staffs at Casablanca made a thorough survey of the whole war, theater by theater. In that totality the operations in China and Burma again fell into the distant ground. It was decided to give first call on Allied resources to the four connected segments of the fight against Germany: the air offensive, the Mediterranean campaign, support for Soviet forces, and assembly of a force for later invasion of Europe from the West. The essential means were to be provided with equal priority for a two-way advance across the Central Pacific and up from the Southwest toward the Philippines.<sup>1</sup>

Not much, compared with these other purposes, was assigned to the China Burma India Theater, but more than before, and the Chinese and British Indian authorities were also called on to provide more. About the best strategy for that area, American military opinion was divided. The senior advisers disagreed as to whether or not to sanction during 1943 the large Burma campaign into which Stilwell had been seeking to shove the Allies. All accepted the fact that the means would not be available to start this action during the coming spring. Stilwell's schedule, already rejected by Chiang Kai-shek, was discarded. The new debated proposal looked toward action after the summer rains ended.

Marshall was strongly for the Burma campaign, so strongly that in one of the meetings of the Combined Chiefs of Staff (January 17th) he went so far as to say "unless Operation Anakim [the Burma campaign] could be undertaken, he felt that a situation might arise in

<sup>1</sup> *The Army Air Forces in World War II* Vol. IV, pages 131-134. Churchill in *The Hinge of Fate*, pages 692-693 gives a lucid summary of the main decisions.

the Pacific at any time that would necessitate the United States regret fully withdrawing from the commitments in the European Theater"<sup>2</sup> Admiral King was as ardent an advocate, being willing even to release precious landing and other naval craft from the South Pacific for the operations in the Bay of Bengal wanted by Chiang Kai shek. But the airmen seemed to share Chennault's opinion that this arduous land campaign was unwise and unnecessary. Thus General Arnold, even after the Combined Chiefs had again approved the plans for the Burma campaign, told Hopkins that in his opinion "the only intelligent move immediately is to strengthen Chennault's Air Force and get at the bombing of Japan as soon as possible"<sup>3</sup> Hopkins' judgment was of the same inclination.

In the upshot, the Combined Chiefs decided that this land battle to reopen a land route into China was essential. Roosevelt was satisfied, Churchill was blithely consenting. The plans which were approved visualized the full campaign—from two or three directions on land and from the sea in the south—target date the 15th of November. But the final decision as to whether actually to carry it through was deferred to the summer, not later than July. In the meanwhile the British were to go on with the small operations they were conducting in South Burma, and the air transport service over the Hump was to be expanded.

At the end of the conference cables were sent to Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek, telling them of these decisions. For the dual purposes of explaining the governing reasons to the Generalissimo, and of getting his assent to the plans for Burma and China, a special mission was hustled out to the East. General Henry H. Arnold, head of the Army Air Forces, accompanied by General Brehon B. Somervell, head of the Army Service Forces, and Marshal Sir John Dill of the British Joint Staff Mission, flew off for India and China. Arnold was carrying promises that we would quickly build up both the China Air Task Force and the air transport service over the Hump. Somervell was a firm believer in the necessity of reopening the Burma Road.

At New Delhi this mission talked with Wavell and Stilwell. The provisional Casablanca plans for action in Burma were, with slight revision, endorsed by all. The unsettled question was taken to be 'would the Generalissimo authorize full Chinese participation?' Arnold and Dill went up to Chungking to get him to do so. They found him far from

<sup>2</sup> Sunderland Romanus manuscript Vol. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Hopkins' memo of talk with General Arnold January 19th, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, Sherwood, page 681.

easy of mind. While willing to consider the projected Burma offensive, his real desire was to get more help for China right away. He asked that three things in particular be done at once. These were:

1. That the American air force in China should be made independent under Chennault.

2. That the air lift over the Hump be increased to ten thousand tons per month. Arnold patiently explained why this was not as easy as ordering a meal: there was a great shortage of transport planes in all theaters of war; the bases in both India and China were wholly inadequate; and the effort needed to provide the fuel and other supplies for such an air lift was very great. Such matters, Arnold found, "The Generalissimo and Chennault glossed over . . . with a wave of their hands. They could not, or would not, be bothered with logistics."<sup>6</sup>

3. That the American air force should have five hundred operative combat aircraft in China by November of that year. The Chinese air force could no longer be counted on even to defend Chungking against the Japanese attacks that would begin again in the hot spring weather, and the Americans would have to take on that job—another claim on Hump tonnage.

Having explained with real regret why these wishes could not be fully met at the time set, Arnold and Dill reaffirmed how much more the United States planned to do than it had been doing. The Generalissimo did not pretend to be satisfied. But he said he would join in with the Burma operation planned for the next November. At the end of the letter he sent off to Roosevelt on February 7th he wrote, "Finally I wish to assure you that in the combined plan of operation for the Burma Campaign . . . the Chinese army will be in readiness to perform its assigned task at the specified time without fail." Stilwell smirked to himself. He had been unable to get answers to his most recent urgent recommendations as to what must be done to get the Chinese armies in good combat shape.

Arnold and Dill stopped off at Calcutta on their way home for further talk with Scow and Wavell. At the end of their conference, Wavell was enough pleased to sum up by saying, ". . . that all were in agreement, and it remained only for all to press on with the greatest possible energy their preparations to start the battle immediately after the monsoon."

Now the President, with the Arnold-Dill-Scow-Wavell report and Chiang

<sup>6</sup> *The Global Mission*, General Henry H. Arnold, 12-2, page 122.



Kai shek's letter of February 7th before him, was confronted more flatly by the clash of opinion among his advisers over the issues presented. He listened to Marshall and Stimson, and to Stilwell through them, and to Arnold, and to Harry Hopkins, and to Chennault directly and through Hopkins and Alsop, and to Madame Chiang Kai shek.

Madame Chiang Kai shek was making a tour of the eastern United States. During her long stay in Washington she talked to the President, Hopkins, Admiral Leahy, the American press, and both houses of Congress.<sup>\*</sup> She allowed a hint of reproach to show itself in her public words, and of grudge in her private words. In the speech which she made to the Senate on the 18th, her point was brought out by a parable.

"One day we [the Generalissimo and herself] went into the Heng Yang Mountains, where there are traces of a famous pavilion called 'Rub-the Mirror' Pavilion.

"Two thousand years ago near that spot was an old Buddhist temple. One of the young monks was there, and all day long he sat cross legged with his hands clasped before him in an attitude of prayer, and murmured 'Amuta Buddha! Amuta Buddha! Amuta Buddha!' He murmured and chanted day after day, because he hoped that he would acquire grace.

"The Father Prior of that temple took a piece of brick and rubbed it against a stone hour after hour, day after day, and week after week. This little acolyte, being very young, sometimes cast his eyes around to see what the old Father Prior was doing. The old Father Prior just kept on his work of rubbing the brick against the stone. So one day the young acolyte said to him, 'Father Prior, what are you doing day after day rubbing this brick on the stone?'

"The Father Prior replied, 'I am trying to make a mirror out of this brick.' The young acolyte said, 'But it is impossible to make a mirror out of a brick, Father Prior.' 'Yes,' said the Father Prior, 'It is just as impossible for you to acquire grace by doing nothing except "Amuta Buddha" all day long, day in and day out.'

"And so to you, gentlemen of the Senate, and to you ladies and gentlemen in the galleries, I say that without the active help of all of us our leaders cannot implement these ideals. It is up to you and to me to take to heart the lesson of the 'Rub-the Mirror pavilion.'"

The President gave Madame Chiang Kai shek every chance to explain her thoughts and feelings. To Hopkins, whom she knew to be sympathetic, she stressed the wish for planes and made blunt references to

<sup>\*</sup> During her visit, she and Soong did not work closely together and she avoided joint talks and occasions.

various past unfulfilled promises. She also urged that China be included in the talks regarding the settlements after the war. Hopkins received the impression that, despite the gush of public acclaim and the applause in Congress, Madame Chiang Kai shek was not altogether happy about her visit, not overimpressed by the promises she received, "tired and a little dispirited."<sup>8</sup>

Dissenting as he rarely did from the recommendations of his Chief of Staff, Roosevelt acceded to Chiang Kai-shek's pleading. He engaged the American government to make a much greater effort in the air for and in China—as rapidly as the greater number of planes could be handled there. At the same time, however, he reaffirmed the opinions of the War Department that air transport and air combat alone would not be enough to strike a vital blow at Japanese forces in China or Japan, and that it was essential to reopen a land route through Burma. He asked the Generalissimo to regard this as the most necessary task before them and to do all he could to carry through the campaign which had been put on the calendar at Casablanca. The United States would, this message continued, soon send to India ten thousand service troops and twenty five thousand tons of equipment to augment the forces building the road through Burma. The first section of the road—from Ledo, in the Indian province of Assam, into North Burma—had already been begun, and it was planned to carry it along toward the frontier of China just as fast as the Japanese could be driven back.

The President wrote a letter to Marshall explaining his course. In this he questioned whether the War Department was giving enough weight to the damage that could be done to Japan by an increased air effort in China, and he clearly hinted that he felt Stilwell was acting unwisely in his dealings with Chiang Kai shek. Marshall's defensive answer holds interest in the light of future events. He said that he would impress upon Stilwell that he must give all the help he could to Chennault and all practical latitude in operations. He then proceeded to expound again the views of the War Department as to what tasks should be put first in China. He observed that the problem of providing by air transport enough supplies to allow Chennault greatly to expand operations would be tremendous, and the risk of expanding them until the Chinese army was strong enough to protect the bases would be great. In his words, "the problem which we will face later in continuous air operations is ground protection for the China airdromes we use,

<sup>8</sup> *Roosevelt and Hopkins*: Sherwood page 206

as well as for the air freight route. We must build for that now. *Here is the most serious consideration* [Marshall's italics] as soon as our air effort hurts the Japs, they will move in on us, not only in the air but also on the ground. The air situation Chennault can take care of with his fighters, but the ground effort against our bases must be met by men on the ground. Ground protection for our airdromes in China and the terminals of the air transport route must come from the Chinese army."

These were the reasons, Marshall continued, why it was essential for any large sustained and protected air effort in China, (1) to have dependable and well trained units in the Chinese army and (2) to reopen the land supply route through Burma, for which also qualified army units would be needed. And, he continued, these were the main factors in Stilwell's strategy and activity. In his efforts to induce the Chinese government to create a force that could be depended on for these two essential tasks, he had met obstruction, delay, and a disposition on the part of the Chinese leaders to let others do their fighting. His sense of urgency about these essentials, along with his knowledge of the present low combat value of the Chinese army, have driven him to talk very plainly to the Generalissimo. He was tough, but only such a man, Marshall thought, would have survived the Burma campaign, battered down the British Indian sluggish resistance to all our plans, and made some headway with the reorganization of the Chinese forces.<sup>1</sup>

A message from Stilwell (which Marshall passed on to the President), reporting on a visit to Kunming, underscored these points. The Chungking government, Stilwell found, could not or would not enforce its orders in Yunnan. The impression that had been created in the United States about the Chinese military effort, he noted, was entirely false. The Chinese army in reality was "in desperate condition, underfed, unpaid, untrained, neglected, and rotten with corruption. If we can train and equip the Yunnan force we can save the situation, but I may have to call for backing in case a showdown is necessary. You may think a year of this has had its effect on me. My opinion of the Chinese people and the Chinese soldier is unchanged. It is the gang of army 'leaders' that is the cause of all our grief."<sup>2</sup>

As a military problem the question of how best to help China at this

<sup>1</sup> Memo Marshall for President March 16, 1943. Sunderland Romanus manuscript Vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Message Stilwell to Marshall March 15, 1943. Sunderland Romanus manuscript Vol. 1.

stage was most complex. It required judgment of facts hard to determine, and an estimate of risks and advantages that were conjectural, the further exposition of these must be left to those who have studied them more fully. Bearing more and more demandingly on the decision was fear of the collapse of the Chinese government and of the Chinese will to fight on. Whatever aspect of the China situation incoming reports from both the Embassy and the Chinese representatives in Washington dealt with, they described it as miserable and growing worse. As Hornbeck remarked in a memo that he wrote on April 3rd, "The Chinese are thinking with their eyes, their hands, their feet, their tired bodies, and their empty pocketbooks rather than with their ears." The news from China seemed clearly to mean that victories and benefits which would require more waiting and struggle were at a discount, and if the American government wanted Chinese resistance to continue, it had better favor such measures as might bring quick relief.

The State Department during this period did what little it could to secure more regard for China's claims for military help. The staff concerned with Far Eastern Affairs tried by word and memo to keep whom ever they could reach reminded of the needs of China and its grounds for complaint. So Maxwell Hamilton, head of the Far Eastern Division, in one of the memos he sent forward during February, warned that "The Chinese are becoming increasingly disappointed and resentful at the lack of military aid, some Chinese spokesmen are beginning to talk of the possibility of China ceasing to be an active belligerent, and question whether China will, unless helped, continue to resist Japan."

In this mood during this winter of 1942-1943, the State Department intoned gloom. It gave the impression of dull didacticism. It was crowded out, and it vaguely knew it. Secretary Hull had limited knowledge of, and less share in, the decisions about Far Eastern military matters. These decisions were being made by the military departments, in close touch with the President and his circle, particularly Hopkins, Leahy, and Currie. Whether restrained by pride from seeking a more active part, or whether just as well satisfied not to be involved in these sharp decisions, the Secretary of State made no complaint. His daily mood was darkened by the cold shadow that had come between him and the Under-Secretary, Sumner Welles. His spirit seemed attracted more and more toward general ideas about how to make the world better after the war, and to retreat from the crude contests over the conduct of the war.

But in the traditional diplomatic sphere Hull carried through one

notable action. The United States, along with other countries, had preserved some special extraterritorial rights in China. These—particularly the maintenance of International Settlements at Shanghai and Amoy and the administration and control of the Diplomatic Quarters at Peiping—had long been resented by the Chinese as a mark of imposed inferiority. Hull decided that there was no better way within his power of showing our recognition of full Chinese freedom and equality than by arranging to give up these privileges. The British government—which had a greater historic part than we in the development of this system of special rights—was brought to agree. Then with skill and patience Hull negotiated a treaty with the Republic of China, giving them up. This treaty was signed on January 11, 1943.<sup>9</sup> The Senate approved it unanimously.<sup>10</sup> Some of the rights voluntarily yielded we had held for almost a century. The American government hoped that this act would be convincing proof that we were ready not only to accord China full sovereignty but help her to maintain it, and that it would remove the last vestige of the accusation that the United States was pursuing in China selfish or imperialist ends.

The action was duly noted and hailed in China and outside. Chiang Kai-shek, on the occasion of signing the treaty, issued a statement to China's armed forces and people, which read, "Today marks a new epoch in Chinese history and by their action our Allies have declared their Pacific War aim to sustain the rule of human decency and human right—and prove their high ideals and lofty purposes. With abolition of the unequal treaties an independent China on equal footing with Great Britain and the United States has become a real friend of those two nations. Henceforth if we are weak, if we lack self-confidence, the fault will be ours." The Chinese press acclaimed the treaty as the end of one hundred years of humiliation, and as realization of the aim of the national revolution.

But it was no cure for the woes which were besetting the Chinese people. Diplomacy could not manage that, only force of arms.

<sup>9</sup> The British and Chinese governments signed a similar treaty on the same day.

<sup>10</sup> The text of the treaty and accompanying notes are printed in the *United States Relations with China* pages 514-519.